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"The Man in the Moon"

See poem "The Man in the Moon," Vol. IV.

Memorial Edition

The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

IN TEN VOLUMES

Including Poems and Prose Sketches, many of which have not heretofore been published; an authentic Biography, an elaborate Index and numerous Illustrations in color from Paintings by Howard Chandler Christy and Ethel Franklin Betts

VOLUME IX

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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SYMPTOMS

I'M not a-workin' now!—
  I'm jes' a-layin' round
A-lettin' *other* people plow.—
  I'm cumberin' the ground! . . .
I jes' don't *keer!*—I've done my sheer
  O' sweatin'!—Anyhow,
In this dad-blasted weather here,
  I'm not a-workin' *now!*

The corn and wheat and all
  Is doin' well enough!—
They' got clean on from now tel Fall
  To show what kind o' stuff
'At's in their *own* dad-burn backbone;
  So, while the Scriptur's 'low
Man ort to reap as he have sown—
  I'm not a-workin' now!

The grass en-nunder these-
  Here ellums 'long "Old Blue,"
And shadders o' the sugar-trees,
  Beats farmin' quite a few!
As feller says,—I ruther guess
  I'll make my comp'ny bow
And *snooze* a few hours—more er less.—
  I'm not a-workin' now!

BUB SAYS

THE moon in the sky is a custard-pie,
An' the clouds is the cream pour'd o'er it
An' all o' the glittering stars in the sky
Is the powdered sugar for it.

. . . . . .

Johnts—he's proudest boy in town—
'Cause his Mommy she cut down
His Pa's pants fer Johnts—an' there
Is 'nuff left fer *'nother* pair!

. . . . . .

One time, when her Ma was gone,
Little Elsie she put on
All her Ma's fine clothes—an' black
Grow-grain-silk, an' sealskin-sack;
Nen while she wuz flouncin' out
In the hall an' round about,
Some one knocked, an' Elsie she
Clean forgot an' run to see

Who's there at the door—an' saw
Mighty quick at wuz her Ma.
But ef she ain't saw at all,
She'd a-knowed her parasol!

. . . . . .

Gran'pas an' Gran'mas is funniest folks!—
Don't be jolly, ner tell no jokes,
Tell o' the weather an' frost an' snow
O' that cold New Year's o' long ago;
An' then they sigh at each other an' cough
An' talk about suddently droppin' off.

THE POOR STUDENT

WITH song elate we celebrate
The struggling Student wight,
Who seeketh still to pack his pate
With treasures erudite;
Who keepeth guard and watch and ward
O'er every hour of day,
Nor less to slight the hours of night,
He watchful is alway.

Though poor in pence, a wealth of sense
He storeth in excess—
With poverty in opulence,
His needs wax never less.
His goods are few,—a shelf or two
Of classics, and a chair—
A banjo—with a bird's-eye view
Of back-lots everywhere.

In midnight gloom, shut in his room,
His vigils he protracts,
E'en to the morning's hectic bloom,
Accumulating facts:

And yet, despite or wrong or right,
He nurtureth a ban,—
He hath the stanchless appetite
Of any hirèd man.

On Jason's fleece and storied Greece
He feeds his hungry mind;
Then stuffs himself like a valise
With "eats" of any kind:
With kings he feigns he feasts, and drains
The wines of ages gone—
Then husks a herring's cold remains
And turns the hydrant on.

In Trojan mail he fronts the gale
Of ancient battle-rout,
When, 'las the hour! his pipe must fail,
And his last "snipe" smush out—
Nor pauses he, unless it be
To quote some cryptic scroll
And poise a sardine pensively
O'er his immortal soul.

UNCLE SIDNEY'S RHYMES

LITTLE Rapacity Greed was a glutton:
He'd eat any meat, from goose-livers to
mutton;
All fowl, flesh, or sausage with all savors through
it—
You never saw sausage stuffed as *he* could do it!
His nice mamma owned, "O he eats as none other
Than animal kind"; and his bright little brother
Sighed, pained to admit a phrase non-eulogistic,
"Rap eats like a—pardon me—Cannibalistic."
"He eats—like a *boor*," said his sister—"a shameless
Plebeian, in sooth, of an ancestry nameless!"
"He eats," moaned his father, despairingly placid
And hopeless,—"he eats like—he eats like an acid!"

"BLUE-MONDAY" AT THE SHOE SHOP

IN THE EARLY SEVENTIES

OH, if we had a rich boss
  Who liked to have us rest,
With a dime's lift for a benchmate
  Financially distressed,—
A boss that's been a "jour." himself
  And ain't forgot the pain
Of restin' one day in the week,
  Then back to work againe!

Chorus

Ho, it's hard times together,
  We've had 'em, you and I,
In all kinds of weather,
  Let it be wet or dry;
But I'm bound to earn my livelihood
  Or lay me down and die!

Poverty compels me
  To face the snow and sleet,—
For pore wife and children
  Must have a crust to eat.—

The sad wail of hunger
It would drive me insane,
If it wasn't for Blue-Monday
When I git to work againe!

Chorus

Ho, it's hard times together,
We've had 'em, you and I,
In all kinds of weather,
Let it be wet or dry;
But I'm bound to earn my livelihood
Or lay me down and die!

Then it's stoke up the stove, Boss,
And drive off the damps:
Cut out me tops, Boss,
And lend me your clamps;—
Pass us your tobacky
Till I give me pipe a start. . . .
Lor', Boss! how we love ye
For your warm kynd heart!

Chorus

Ho, it's hard times together,
We've had 'em, you and I,
In all kinds of weather,
Let it be wet or dry;
But I'm bound to earn my livelihood
Or lay me down and die!

THE THOUGHTS OF YOUTH

THE BOYS'

THE lisping maid,
In shine and shade
Half elfin and half human,
We love as such—
Yet twice as much
Will she be loved as woman.

THE GIRLS'

The boy we see,
Of two or three—
Or even as a baby,
We love to kiss
For what he is,
Yet more for what he may be.

O. HENRY

WRITTEN IN THE CHARACTER OF SHERRARD PLUMMER

O HENRY, Afrite-chef of all delight!—
Of all delectables conglomerate
That stay the starved brain and rejuvenate
The mental man. Th' esthetic appetite—
So long anhungered that its "in'ards" fight
And growl gutwise,—its pangs thou dost abate
And all so amiably alleviate,
Joy pats its belly as a hobo might
Who haply hath attained a cherry pie
With no burnt bottom in it, ner no seeds—
Nothin' but crispest crust, and thickness fit,
And squshin'-juicy, and jes' mighty nigh
Too dratted drippin'-sweet fer human needs,
But fer the sosh of milk that goes with it.

WILLIAM McKINLEY

CANTON, OHIO, SEPTEMBER 30, 1907

HE said: "It is God's way:
His will, not ours be done."
And o'er our land a shadow lay
That darkened all the sun.
The voice of jubilee
That gladdened all the air,
Fell sudden to a quavering key
Of suppliance and prayer.

He was our chief—our guide—
Sprung of our common Earth,
From youth's long struggle proved and tried
To manhood's highest worth:
Through toil, he knew all needs
Of all his toiling kind—
The favored striver who succeeds—
The one who falls behind.

The boy's young faith he still
Retained through years mature—
The faith to labor, hand and will,
Nor doubt the harvest sure—

The harvest of man's love—
A nation's joy that swells
To heights of Song, or deeps whereof
But sacred silence tells.

To him his Country seemed
Even as a Mother, where
He rested—slept; and once he dreamed—
As on her bosom there—
And thrilled to hear, within
That dream of her, the call
Of bugles and the clang and din
Of war. . . . And o'er it all

His rapt eyes caught the bright
Old Banner, winging wild
And beck'ning him, as to the fight . . .
When—even as a child—
He wakened—And the dream
Was real! And he leapt
As led the proud Flag through a gleam
Of tears the Mother wept.

His was a tender hand—
Even as a woman's is—
And yet as fixed, in Right's command,
As this bronze hand of his:
This was the Soldier brave—
This was the Victor fair—
This is the Hero Heaven gave
To glory here—and There.

"MOTHER"

I'M gittin' old—I know,—
It seems so long ago—
So long sence John was here!
He went so young!—our Jim
'S as old now 'most as him,—
Close on to thirty year'!

I know I'm gittin' old—
I know it by the *cold,*
From time 'at first frost flies.—
Seems like—sence John was here—
Winters is more severe;
And winter I de-spise!

And yet it seems, some days,
John's here, with his odd ways . . .
Comes soon-like from the corn-
Field, callin' "Mother" at
Me—like he called me that
Even 'fore Jim was *born!*

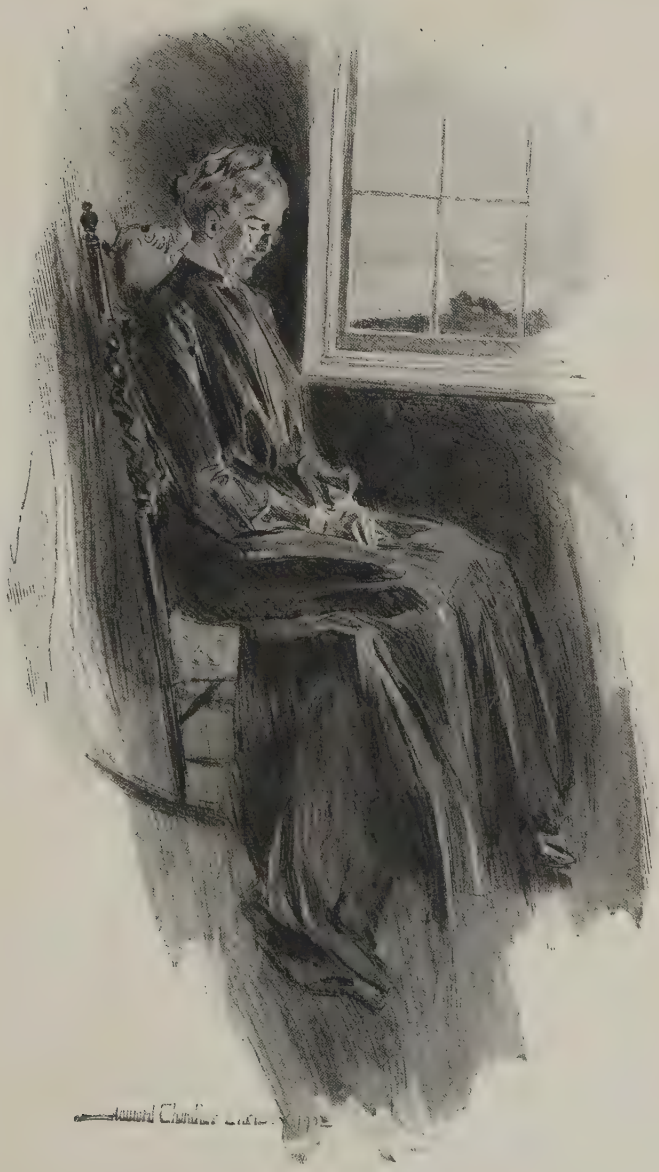
When Jim come—La! how good
Was all the neighborhood!—
  And Doctor!—when I heerd
Him joke John, kind o' low,
And say: Yes, folks could go—
  PA needn't be afeard!

When Jim come,—John says-'e—
A-bendin' over me
  And baby in the bed—
And jes' us three,—says-'e
"Our little family!"
  And that was all he said . . .

And cried jes' like a child!—
Kissed me again, and smiled,—
  'Cause I was cryin' too.
And here I am *again*
A-cryin', same as then—
  Yet happy through and through!

The old home's most in mind
And joys long left behind . . .
  Jim's little h'istin' crawl
Acrost the floor to where
John set a-rockin' there . . .
  (I'm *gittin' old*—That's all!)

I'm gittin' old—no doubt—
(*Healthy* as all git-out!)—
  But, strangest thing I do,—



"I'm gittin' old—I know,—"

I cry so *easy* now—
I cry jes' anyhow
  The fool-tears wants me to!

But Jim *he* won't be told
'At "Mother" 's gittin' old! . . .
  Hugged me, he did, and smiled
This morning, and bragged *"shore"*
He loved me even more
  Than when he was a child!

That's *his* way; but ef *John*
Was here now, lookin' on,
  He'd shorely know and see:
"But, 'Mother,' " s'pect he'd say,
"S'pose you *air* gittin' gray,
  You're younger yet than *me!*"

I'm gittin' old,—because
Our young days, like they was,
  Keeps comin' back—so clear,
'At little Jim, once more,
Comes h'istin' crost the floor
  Fer John's old rockin'-cheer!

. . . . . .

O *beautiful!*—to be
A-gittin' old, like me! . . .
  Hey, Jim! Come in now, Jim!
Your supper's ready, dear!
(How more, every year,
  He looks and acts like *him!*)

THE BOYS OF THE OLD GLEE CLUB

YOU-FOLKS rickollect, I know—
'Tain't so *very* long ago—
Th' Old Glee Club—was got up here
'Bout first term Grant tuk the Cheer
Fer President four year—and then
Riz—and tuk the thing again!
Politics was runnin' high,
And the *Soldiers* mighty nigh
Swep' the Country—'bout on par
With their rickord through the War.
Glee Club, mainly, Soldiers, too—
Most the Boys had wore the blue,—
So their singin' had the swing—
Kind o' sort o' Shiloh-ring,
Don't you know, 'at kind o' got
Clean *inside* a man and shot
Telegrams o' joy dee-vine
Up and down his mortal spine!

They was jest *boys* then, all young—
And 'bout lively as they sung!
Now they hain't young any more—
('Less the ones 'at's gone before
'S got their youth back, glad and free
'N' keerless as they used to be!)
Burgess Brown's old friends all 'low
He is 'most as lively now,
And as full o' music, too,
As when Old Glee Club was new!
And *John Blake,* you mind, 'at had
The near-sightedness so bad,
When he sung by note, the rest
Read 'em fer him, er he *guessed*
How they run—and *sung* 'em, too,
Clair and sweet as honey-dew!
Harry Adams's here—and he's
Jollyin' ever' man he sees
'At complains o' gittin' gray
Er a-*age*in' anyway.
Harry he jest *thrives* on fun—
"Troubles?" *he* says,—"Nary one!—
Got gran'-children I can play
And keep young with, night and day!"
Then there's *Ozzy Weaver*—he's
Kickin', lively as you please,—
'N' *Dearie Macy.*—Called 'em then
"The Cherubs." Sung "We are two Men
O' th' Olden Time." Well! their duets
Was jest sweet as violets!
And *Dan Ransdell*—he's still here—

Not jest in the *town,* but near
Enough, you bet, to allus come
Prompt' on time to vote at home!
Dan he's be'n in Washington
Sence he went with Harrison. . . .
And *John Slauson*—(Boys called John
"Sloppy Weather.")—he went on
Once to Washington; and Dan
Intertained him:—Ever' man,
From the President, to all
Other big-guns Dan could haul
In posish 'ud have to shake
Hands with John fer old times' sake.
And to hear *John,* when he got
Home again, w'y, you'd 'a' caught
His own sperit and dry fun
And mis-*chieve*-y-ousness 'at run
Through his talk of all he see:—
"Ruther pokey there, fer *me,*"
John says,—"though, of course, I met
Mostly jest the *Cabinet*
Members; and the President
He'd drop round: and then we went
Incogg fer a quiet walk—
Er sometimes jest set and talk
'Bout old times back here—and how
All *you*-boys was doin' now,
And Old Glee Club songs; and then
He'd say, 'f he *could,* once again,
Jest hear *us*—'*once more,*' says he,—

'I'd shed Washington, D. C.,
And jest fall in ranks with you
And march home, a-singin', too!' "
And *Bob Geiger—Now* lives down
At Atlanty,—but this town
'S got Bob's *heart*—a permanent
And time-honored resident.
Then there's *Mahlon Butler*—still
Lookin' like he allus will!
"How you feelin'?" s'I, last time
I see Mahlon: 'N' *he* says, "I'm
'Feelin'?' " says, "so peert and gay
'F I's *hitched up* I'd run away!"
He says, "Course I'm *bald* a bit,
But not 'nough to *brag* on it
Like *Dave Wallace* does," he says,
"With his *two* shamefacetedness!"
(Dave jest laughs and lifts his "dice"
At the joke, and blushes—twice.)
And *Ed. Thompson, he's* gone on—
They's a whole quartette 'at's gone—
Yes, a whole quartette, and *more,*
Has crossed on the Other Shore. . . .
Sabold and *Doc Wood'ard's* gone—
'N' *Ward;* and—last,—*Will Tarkington.*—
Ward 'at made an Irish bull
Actchully jest beautiful!—
" 'Big-nose Ben,' " says Ward, "I s'pose,
Makes an eyesore of his nose!"
And *Will Tarkington*—Ef *he*

Ever had an *inemy,*
The Good Bein's plans has be'n
Tampered with!—because all men,
Women and childern—ever' one—
Loved to love Will Tarkington!

The last time I heerd 'em *all*
Was at Tomilsonian Hall,
As I rickollect—and *know,*—
Must be'n fifteen year' ago!—
Big Mass Meetin'—*thousands* here. . . .
Old Dick Thompson in the Cheer
On the stage—and three er four
Other "Silver-Tongues" er more! . . .
Mind Ben Harrison?—Clean, rich,
Ringin' voice—" 'bout concert-pitch,"
Tarkington *he* called it, and
Said its music 'clipsed the band
And Glee Club both rolled in one!—
('Course you all knowed *Harrison!*)
Yes, and Old Flag, streamin' clean
From the high arch 'bove the scene
And each side the Speaker's stand.—
And a *Brass,* and *Sheepskin* Band,
('Twixt the speeches 'at was made)
'At cut loose and banged and played—
S'pose, to have the *noise* all through
So's th' crowd could listen to
Some *real* music!—Then Th' Old Glee
Club marched out to victory!—

And sich singin'!—Boys was jest
At their very level-best! . . .
My! to *hear* 'em!—From old "Red-
White-and-Blue," to "Uncle Ned"!—
From "The Sword of Bunker Hill,"
To "Billy Magee-Magaw"!—And—still
The more they sung, the more, you know,
The crowd jest *wouldn't* let 'em go!—
Till they reached the final notch
O' glory with old "Larboard Watch"!
Well! *that* song's a song my soul
Jest swings off in, past control!—
Allus did and allus will
Lift me clair of earthly ill
And interrogance and doubt
O' what the good Lord's workin' out
Anyway er *anyhow!* . . .
Shet my eyes and hear it *now!*—
Till, at night, that ship and sea
And wet waves jest wallers me
Into that same sad yet glad
Certainty *the Sailor* had
When waked to his watch and ward
By th' lone whisper of the Lord—
Heerd high 'bove the hoarsest roar
O' any storm on sea er shore!

Time's be'n clockin' on, you know!
Sabold, who was first to go,
Died back East, in ninety-three,
At his old home, Albany:

Ward was next to leave us—Died
New York. . . . How we've laughed and
cried
Both together at them two
Friends and comards tried and true!—
Ner they wasn't, when they died,
Parted long—'most side-by-side
They went singin', you might say,
Till their voices died away
Kind o' into a duet
O' silence they're rehearsin' yet.

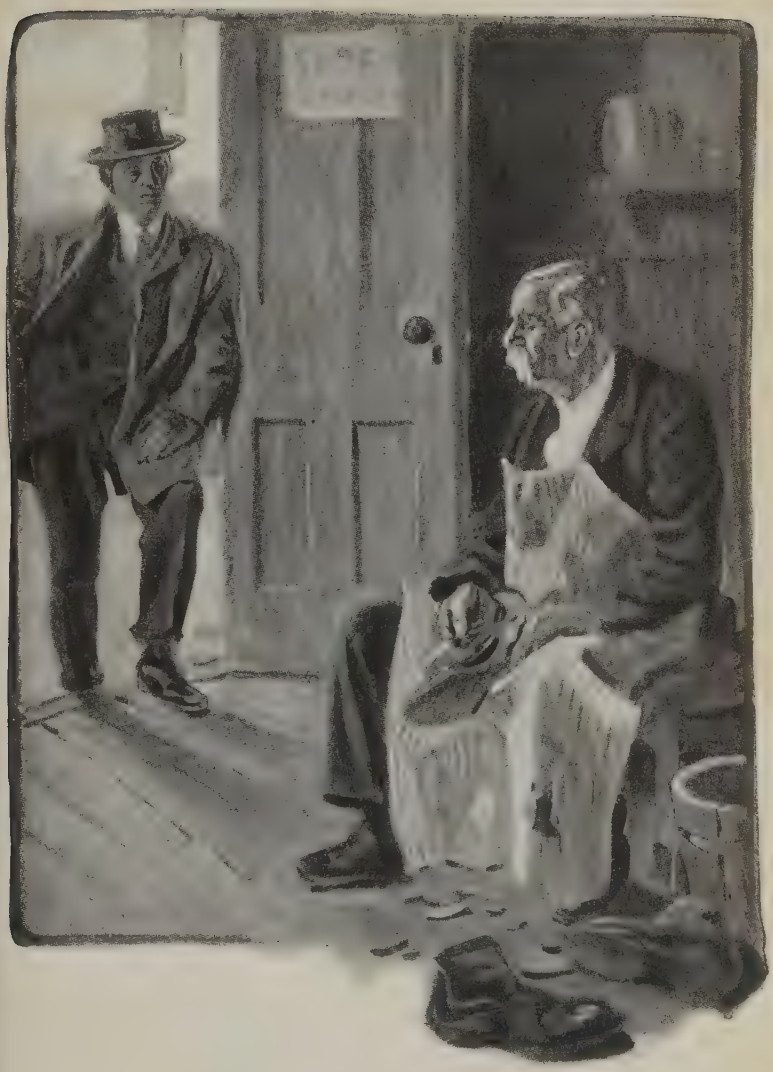
Old Glee Club's be'n meetin' less
And less frequenter, I guess,
Sence so many's had to go—
And the rest all miss 'em so!
Still they's calls they' got to make,
Fer old reputation's sake,
So to speak; but, 'course, they all
Can't jest answer *ever'* call—
'Ceptin' Christmas-times, er when
Charity calls on 'em then;
And—not *chargin'* anything—
W'y, the Boys's jest *got* to sing! . . .
Campaign work, and jubilees
To wake up the primaries;
Loyal Legions—G. A. R.'s—
Big Reunions—Stripes-and-Stars
Fer Schoolhouses ever'where—
And Church-doin's, here and there—
And Me-morial Meetin's, when

Our War-Gov'ner lives again!
Yes, and Decoration Days—
Martial music—prayers and praise
Fer the Boys 'at marched away
So's *we'd* have a place to stay! . . .
Little childern, 'mongst the flowers,
Learnin' 'bout this Land of Ours,
And the price these Soldiers paid,
Gethered in their last parade. . . .
O that sweetest, saddest sound!—
"Tenting on the old Campground." . . .
The Old Glee Club—singin' so
Quaverin'-like and soft and low,
Ever' listener in the crowd
Sings in *whispers*—but, *out 'loud,*
Sings as ef he didn't keer—
Not fer *nothin'!* . . . Ketch me here
Whilse I'm honest, and I'll say
God's way is the only way! . . .
So I' allus felt, i jing!
Ever' time the Boys 'ud sing
'Bout "A Thousand Years, my Own
Columbia!"—er "The Joys we've Known"—
"Hear dem Bells"—er "Hi-lo, Hail!"—
I have felt God must prevail—
Jest like ever boy 'at's gone
Of 'em all, whilse he was on
Deck here with us, seemed to be
Livin', laughin' proof, to *me,*
Of Eternal Life—No more
Will than *them all,* gone before! . . .

Can't I—many-a-time—jest see
Them *all,* like they *used* to be!—
Tarkington, fer instance, clean
Outside o' the man you *seen,*
Singin'—till not only you
Heerd his voice but *felt* it, too,
In back of the bench you set
In—And 'most can feel it yet!
Yes, and Will's the last o' five
Now that's dead—yet still *alive,*
True as Holy Writ's own word
Has be'n spoke and man has heerd!
Them was left when Will went on
Has met once sence he was gone—
Met jest once—but not to sing
Ner to practise anything.—
Facts is, they jest didn't know
Why they *was* a-meetin' so;—
But *John Brush* he had it done
And invited ever' one
Of 'em he could find, to call
At his office, "Music Hall,"
Four o'clock—one Saturd'y
Afternoon.—And this was three
Er four weeks, mind, sence the day
We had laid poor Will away.
Mahlon Butler he come past
My shop, and I dropped my last
And went with him, wonder'n', too,
What new *joke* Brush had in view;—

But, when all got there, and one-
By-one was give' a seat, and none
O' Brush's *twinkles* seemed in sight,
'N' he looked *biz* all right, all right,—
We saw—when he'd locked the door—
What *some* of us, years before,
Had seen, and long sence fergot—
(*Seen* but not *heerd,* like as not.)—
How Brush, once when Admiral Brown
'S back here in his old home-town
And flags ever'wheres—and Old
Glee Club tellin' George to "Hold
The Fort!" and "We" would "make 'em flee
By land and sea," et cetery,—
How Brush had got the Boys to sing
A song in that-there very thing
Was on the table there to-day—
Some kind o' *'phone,* you know.—But *say!*
When John touched it off, and we
Heerd it singin'—No-sir-ee!—
Not the *machine* a-singin'—No,—
Th' *Old Glee Club* o' long ago! . . .
There was *Sabold's* voice again—
'N' *Ward's;*—and, sweet as summer-rain,
With glad boy-laughture's trills and runs,
Ed. Thompson's voice and *Tarkington's!* . . .
And *ah,* to *hear* them, through the storm
Of joy that swayed each listener's form—
Seeming to call, with hail and cheer,
From Heaven's high seas down to us here:—

"But who can speak the joy he feels
While o'er the foam his vessel reels,
And his tired eyelids slumbering fall,
He rouses at the welcome call
Of 'Larboard Watch, Ahoy!'"
. . . . . And *O*
To *hear* them—same as long ago—
The listeners whispered, still as death,
With trembling lips and broken breath,
As with one voice—and eyes all wet,—
"God!—*God!—Thank God, they're singing yet!*"



"You-folks rickollect, I know—"

"MONA MACHREE"

Mona Machree, I'm the wanderin' creature now,
Over the sea;
Slave of no lass, but a lover of Nature now,
Careless and free.

—T. A. Daly

MONA MACHREE! och, the sootherin' flow of it,
Soft as the sea,
Yet, in under the mild, moves the wild undertow of it
Tuggin' at me,
Until both the head and the heart o' me's fightin'
For breath, nigh a death all so grandly invitin'
That—barrin' your own livin' yet—I'd delight in,
Drowned in the deeps of this billowy song to you
Sung by a lover your beauty has banned,
Not alone from your love but his dear native land,
Whilst the kiss of his lips, and touch of his hand,
And his song—all belong to you,
Mona Machree!

SONG DISCORDANT

I WANT to say it, and I will:—
  You are as sour as you are sweet,
And sweeter than the daffodil
  That blossoms at your feet.—
You are as plain as you are fair;
  And though I hate, I love you still,
And so—*confound* you, darling! *There!*—
  I want to say it, and I will!

I want to ask it, and I do
  Demand of you a perfect trust,—
But love me as I want you to—
  You must, you minx!—you must!
You blight and bless me, till I swear
  And pray—chaotic even as you.—
I curse—Nay, dear,—I *kiss* you. *There!*—
  I want to, and I do!

LARRY NOOLAN'S NEW YEAR

BE-GORRIE, aI wor sorry
When the Ould Year died:
An' aI says, "aI'll shtart to-morry,
Like aI've always thried—
aI'll give yez all fair warnin'
aI'll be shtartin' in the mornin'
From the wakeness aI was born in—
When the Ould Year died."

The year forninsht the pasht wan,
When the Ould Year died,
Says aI, "This is the lasht wan
aI'll be filled—wid pride."
So says aI til Miss McCarty
aI wor meetin' at the party,
"Lave us both be drinkin' hearty!"
When the Ould Year died.

So we dined an' wined together,
When the Ould Year died,
An' agreed on health an' weather,
An' the whule wurrld wide,
An' says aI,—"aI'm thinkin' very
Much it's you aI'd like to marry."
"Then," says she, "why don't you, Larry?"
When the Ould Year died.

LISPING IN NUMBERS

WE' got a' Uncle writes poetry-rhymes
Fer me an' Eddie to *speak,* sometimes,—
'Cause *he's* a *poet*—an' he gits *paid*
Fer poetry-writin',—'cause that's his *trade.*
An' Eddie says he's goin' to try
To be a poet, too, by an' by
When he's a man!—an' I 'spect he is,
'Cause on his slate wunst he print' this
An' call it

"The Squirl and the Funy Litel Girl"

"A litel girl
Whose name wuz Perl
Went to the woods to play.
The day wuz brite,
An' her hart wuz lite
As she galy skiped a way.

"A queer litel chatter,
A soft litel patter,
She herd in the top of a tree:
The surprizd litel Perl
Saw a qute litel squirl,
As cuning as cuning cud be.

"She twisted her curl,
As she looked at the squirl,
An' playfully told it 'good day!'
She calld it 'Bunny'—
Wuzent that funy?
An' it noded an' bounded a way."

Ma read it, an' says "she's *awful proud,"*—
An' Pa says "Splen'id!" an' laugh' out loud;
But Uncle says, "You can talk as you please,
It's a purty good little poetry-piece!"

BENJAMIN HARRISON

ON THE UNVEILING OF HIS MONUMENT AT INDIANAPOLIS—OCTOBER 27, 1908

AS tangible a form in History
The Spirit of this man stands forth as here
He towers in deathless sculpture, high and clear
Against the bright sky of his destiny.
Sprung of our oldest, noblest ancestry,
His pride of birth, as lofty as sincere,
Held kith and kin, as Country, ever dear—
Such was his sacred faith in you and me.
Thus, natively, from youth his work was one
Unselfish service in behalf of all—
Home, friends and sharers of his toil and stress;
Ay, loving all men and despising none,
And swift to answer every righteous call,
His life was one long deed of worthiness.

The voice of Duty's faintest whisper found
Him as alert as at her battle-cry—
When awful War's battalions thundered by,
High o'er the havoc still he heard the sound

Of mothers' prayers and pleadings all around;
And ever the despairing sob and sigh
Of stricken wives and orphan children's cry
Made all our Land thrice consecrated ground.
So rang his "Forward!" and so swept his sword—
On!—on!—till from the fire-and-cloud once more
Our proud Flag lifted in the glad sunlight
As though the very Ensign of the Lord
Unfurled in token that the strife was o'er,
And victory—as ever—with the right.

LEE O. HARRIS

CHRISTMAS DAY—1909

O SAY not he is dead,
The friend we honored so;
Lift up a grateful voice instead
And say: He lives, we know—
We know it by the light
Of his enduring love
Of honor, valor, truth and right,
And man, and God above.

Remember how he drew
The child-heart to his own,
And taught the parable anew,
And reaped as he had sown;
Remember with what cheer
He filled the little lives,
And stayed the sob and dried the tear
With mirth that still survives.

All duties to his kind
It was his joy to fill;
With nature gentle and refined,
Yet dauntless soul and will,

He met the trying need
Of every troublous call,
Yet high and clear and glad indeed
He sung above it all.

Ay, listen! Still we hear
The patriot song, the lay
Of love, the woodland note so dear—
These will not die away.
Then say not he is dead,
The friend we honor so,
But lift a grateful voice instead,
And say: He lives, we know.

SOMETHING

SITTING by the glimmer
Of the fire to-night,
Though the glowing embers
Sparkle with delight—
There's a sense of something,
Vaguely understood,
Stealing o'er the spirit
As a shadow would.

Is it that the shutter
Shudders in the wind
As a lance of moonshine
Shivers through the blind?
Or the lamplight dancing
In pretended glee
As the keynote whistles
In a minor key?

Footsteps on the sidewalk,
Crunching through the snow,
Seem to whisper something
Of the long ago—
And the merry greetings
Of the passers-by
Seem like truant echoes
Coming home to die.

I have coaxed my pencil
For a smiling face,
But the sketch is frowning
And devoid of grace;
And the airy waltzes
Of my violin
Die away in dirges
Ere I well begin.

Lay away the story—
Though the theme is sweet—
There's a lack of something
Makes it incomplete;
There's a nameless yearning—
Strangely undefined—
For a something better
Than the common kind.

Something! Oh, that something!
We may never know
Why the soul is haunted
Ever thus and so,
Till the longing spirit
Answers to the call
Of the trumpet sounding
Something after all.

A CHRISTMAS-TIME JINGLE

MY dears, do you know, one short Christmas ago,
There were two little children named Jimpsy and Jo,
Who were stolen away by their Uncle that day,
Who drove round and carted them off in a sleigh?

And the two little chaps, rolled in buffalo wraps,
With their eyes in the furs and their hands in their laps,
He whizzed down the street, through the snow and the sleet
At a gait old Kriss Kringle himself couldn't beat.

And their Uncle yelled "Ho!" all at once, and then "Whoa!
Mr. Horses, this store is where we must go."
And as the sleigh stopped, up the heads popped,
And out on the sidewalk the old Uncle hopped.

And he took the boys in, with a wink and a grin,
And had 'em dressed clean up from toe-tip to chin,
Then he bundled 'em back in the sleigh, and cur-rack!
Went the whip; and away they all went whizzin' back.

And Jimpsy and Jo, when they marched in, you know,
There at home, with new suits, both their parents says "Oh,
What dee-lishamous rare little children you air,—
W'y you' got the best Uncle tha' is anywhere!"

But their Uncle just pats the boys' heads and says, "Rats!"
In a whisper to them—"Parents purr same as cats";
Then he kissed 'em and rose and fished round in his clothes,
And lit his old pipe with the end of his nose.

WHEN BABY PLAYED

WHEN Baby played,
The very household tasks were stayed
To listen to her voice:—Secrete,
We heard her lisping, low and sweet,
Among her many dolls and pets;
Or, at her window's mignonettes,
Making some butterfly—arrayed
In tremulous gold—all unafraid—
When Baby played.

When Baby played
Amidst the reapers,—why, they laid
Their work aside, and with loud glee
Tossed her among them tenderly;
And they did single, from the blur
Of tousled grasses, blooms for her—
To wreathe about her throat and wrist,
While for the service each was kissed,
And on till evensong was made
So happier.—When Baby played.

When Baby played,
The lilies down the everglade
Grew purer—where the waters leapt,
The willows laughed instead of wept;
And the glad winds went merrying
To sway the empty grapevine-swing
She needs must leave, in answer to
Our call from home at fall of dew—
And mimicking the call we made.—
When Baby played,—when Baby played.

WHEN BABY SLEPT

WHEN weenty-teenty Baby slept,—
With voices stilled we lightly stepped
And knelt beside the rug where she
Had fallen in sleep all wearily;
And when a dimpled hand would stir,
We breathlessly bent over her
And kissed the truant strands that swept
The tranc'd lids and the dreams that kept—
When Baby blinked her Court and slept.

When Baby waived her throne and slept,
It seemed the sunshine lightlier crept
Along the carpet and the wall,
Her playhouse, tea-set, pets and all:—
A loud fly hushed its hum and made
The faintest Fairy-serenade,
That lulled all waking things except
The goldfish as he flashed and leapt—
When Baby doffed her crown and slept.

When sunset veiled her as she slept,
No other sight might intercept
Our love-looks, meant for her alone
The fairest blossom ever blown
In all God's garden-lands below!
Our Spirits whispered, Even so,
And made high mirth in undertone,
In stress of joy all sudden grown
A laugh of tears:—for thus we wept,
When Baby donned her dreams, and slept.

WHEN BABY WOKE

WHEN weenty-teenty Baby woke,
It seemed all summer blossoms broke
In fragrant laughter—that the birds,
Instead of warbles, sang in words!—
Oh, it did seem to us (who, in
Our rapture, dappled cheek and chin
With our warm kisses) to invoke
Our love to break as morning broke!—
When wondrous Baby woke.

When our enraptured Baby woke,—
As when on violets sink and soak
The dewdrops of some glorious dawn,—
So seemed the eyes we gazed upon;
And when they smiled, we, bending lower,
Knew never sunlight any more
Would be as bright to us—and thus
Forever must they shine for us!
When Baby dewed her eyes and woke.

When Baby danced her eyes and woke—
The hearts within us, stroke on stroke,
Went throbbing like the pulse of some
High harmony harp-strings might thrum

In halls enchanted of the lore
Of Arthur's court in days of yore,—
To us she was "a princess fair"—
An "Elfin Queen"—"A ladye rare"—
And we but simple-minded folk—
When Baby woke,—when Baby woke.

A HOBO VOLUNTARY

OH, the hobo's life is a roving life;
It robs pretty maids of their heart's delight—
It causes them to weep and it causes them to mourn
For the life of a hobo, never to return.

The hobo's heart it is light and free,
Though it's Sweethearts all, farewell to thee!—
Farewell to thee, for it's far away
The homeless hobo's footsteps stray.

In the morning bright, or the dusk so dim,
It's any path is the one for him!
He'll take his chances, long or short,
For to meet his fate with a valiant heart.

Oh, it's beauty mops out the sidetracked-car,
And it's beauty-beaut' at the pigs-feet bar;
But when his drinks and his eats is made
Then the hobo shunts off down the grade.

He camps near town, on the old crick-bank,
And he cuts his name on the water-tank—
He cuts his name and the hobo sign,—
"Bound for the land of corn and wine!"

He's lonesome-like, so he gits run in,
To git the hang o' the world again;
But the laundry circles he moves in there
Makes him sigh for the country air,—

So it's Good-by gals! and he takes his chance
And wads hisself through the workhouse-fence:
He sheds the town and the railroad, too,
And strikes mud roads for a change of view.

The jay drives by on his way to town,
And looks on the hobo in high scorn,
And so likewise does the farmhands stare—
But what the haids does the hobo care!

He hits the pike, in the summer's heat
Or the winter's cold, with its snow and sleet—
With a boot on one foot, and one shoe—
Or he goes barefoot, if he chooses to.

But he likes the best when the day is warm,
With his bum prince-albert on his arm—
He likes to size up a farmhouse where
They haint no man nor bulldog there.

Oh, he gits his meals wherever he can,
So natchurly he's a handy man—
He's a handy man both day and night,
And he's always blest with an appetite!

(Oh, it's I like friends that he'ps me through,
And the friends also that he'ps you, too,—
Oh, I like all friends, 'most every kind
But I don't like friends that don't like mine.)

There's friends of mine when they gits the hunch
Comes a swarmin' in, the blasted bunch,—
"Clog-step Jonny" and "Flat-wheel Bill"
And "Brockey Ike" from Circleville.

With "Cooney Ward" and "Sikes the Kid"
And old "Pop Lawson"—the best we had—
The rankest mug and the worst for lush
And the dandiest of the whole blame push.

Oh, them's the times I remembers best
When I took my chance with all the rest,
And hogged fried chicken and roastin' ears, too,
And sucked cheroots when the feed was through.

Oh, the hobo's way is the railroad line,
And it's little he cares for schedule time;
Whatever town he's a-striken for
Will wait for him till he gits there.

And whatever burg that he lands in
There's beauties there just thick for him—
There's beauty at "The Queen's Taste Lunch-
stand," sure,
Or "The Last Chance Boardin' House" back door.

A tin o' black coffee, and a rhuburb pie—
Be they old and cold as charity—
They're hot-stuff enough for the pore hobo,
And it's "Thanks, kind lady, for to treat me so!"

Then he fills his pipe with a stub cigar
And swipes a coal from the kitchen-fire,
And the hired girl says, in a smilin' tone,—
"It's good-by, John, if you call that goin'!"

Oh, the hobo's life is a roving life,
It robs pretty maids of their heart's delight—
It causes them to weep and it causes them to mourn
For the life of a hobo, never to return.

TO BENJ. S. PARKER

YOU sang the song of rare delight
" 'Tis morning and the days are long"—
A morning fresh and fair and bright
As ever dawned in happy song;
A radiant air, and here and there
Were singing birds on sprays of bloom,
And dewy splendors everywhere,
And heavenly breaths of rose perfume—
All rapturous things were in the song
" 'Tis morning and the days are long."

O singer of the song divine,
Though now you turn your face away
With never word for me or mine
Nor smile forever and a day,
We guess your meaning, and rejoice
In what has come to you—the meed
Beyond the search of mortal voice
And only in the song indeed—
With you forever, as the song,
" 'Tis morning and the days are long."

MY CONSCIENCE

SOMETIMES my Conscience says, says
he,
"Don't you know me?"
And I, says I, skeered through and through,
"Of course I do.
You air a nice chap ever' way,
I'm here to say!
You make me cry—you make me pray,
And all them good things thataway—
That is, at *night*. Where do you stay
Durin' the day?"

And then my Conscience says, onc't more,
"You know me—shore?"
"Oh, yes," says I, a-trimblin' faint,
"You're jes' a saint!
Your ways is all so holy-right,
I love you better ever' night
You come around,—tel' plum daylight,
When you air out o' sight!"

'And then my Conscience sort o' grits
His teeth, and spits
On his two hands and grabs, of course,
Some old remorse,
And beats me with the big butt-end
O' *that* thing—tel my clostest friend
'Ud hardly know me. "Now," says he,
"Be keerful as you'd orto be
And *allus* think o' me!"

TOD

TOD

STODDARD ANDERSON was the boy's name, though had you made inquiry for Stoddard Anderson of any boy of the town in which he lived—and I myself lived there, a handy boy in the dim old days—you doubtless would have been informed that nobody of that name was there. Your juvenile informant, however, by way of gratuitous intelligence, might have gone on to state that two families of the name of Anderson resided there,—"Old Do-good" Anderson, the preacher, and his brother John. But had you asked for "Tod" Anderson, or simply "Tod," your boy would have known Tod; your boy, in all likelihood, would have had especial reasons for remembering Tod, although his modesty, perhaps, might not allow him to inform you how Tod had "waxed it to him more'n onc't"! But he would have told you, as I tell you now, that Tod Anderson was the preacher's boy, and lived at the parsonage. Tod was a queer boy.

Stoddard Anderson was named in honor of some obscure divine his father had joined church under when a boy. It was a peculiar weakness of the father to relate the experience of his early conviction; and as he never tired of repeating it, by way

of precept and admonition to the wayward lambkins of his flock, Tod mastered its most intricate and sacred phraseology, together even with the father's more religious formulas, to a degree of perfection that enabled him to preside at mock meetings in the hay-loft, and offer the baptismal service at the "swimmin'-hole."

In point of personal or moral resemblance, Tod was in nowise like his father. Some said he was the picture of his mother, they who could remember her, for she fell asleep when Tod was three days old, with her mother-arms locked around him so closely that he cried, and they had to take him away from her. No.—Death had taken her away from him.

It needs now no chronicle to tell how Tod thrived in spite of his great loss, and how he grew to be a big, fat, two-fisted baby with a double chin, the pride and constant worry of the dear old grandmother into whose care he had fallen. It requires no space in history's crowded page to tell how he could stand up by a chair when eight months old, and crow and laugh and doddle his little chubby arms till he quite upset his balance, and, pulling the chair down with him, would laugh and crow louder than ever, and kick, and crawl, and sprawl, and jabber; and never lift a whimper of distress but when being rocked to sleep. Let a babyhood of usual interest be inferred—then add a few more years, and you will have the Tod of ten I knew.

O moral, saintlike, and consistent Christian, what is it in the souls of little children so antagonistic to

your own sometimes? What is it in their wayward and impulsive natures that you can not brook? And what strange tincture of rebellious feeling is it that embitters all the tenderness and love you pour out so lavishly upon their stubborn and resentful hearts? Why is it you so covetously cherish the command divine, "Children, obey your parents," and yet find no warm nook within the breast for that old houseless truth that goes wailing through the world:

> "A boy's will is the wind's will,
> And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts"?

Tod went to school—the thriftless Tod!—not wholly thriftless, either; for, although he had not that apt way of skimming like a swallow down the placid rills of learning, he did possess, in some mysterious strength, a most extraordinary knack of acquiring just such information as was not taught at school, and had no place within the busy hive of knowledge.

Tod was a failure in arithmetic. Tod couldn't tell twice ten from twice eternity. Tod knew absolutely nothing of either Christopher Columbus or the glorious country he discovered expressly for the use of industry and learning, as the teacher would have had him implicitly believe. Tod couldn't tell you anything of John Smith, even, that very noted captain who walks cheek by jowl with the dusky Pocahontas across the illimitable fancy of the ten-year-old schoolboy of our glorious republic. Tod knew all about the famous Captain Kidd, however. In fact,

Tod could sing his history with more lively interest and real appreciation than his fellow schoolmates sang geography. The simple Tod once joined the geographical chorus with:

"I'd a Bible in my hand,
As I sailed, as I sailed,
And I sunk her in the sand,
As I sailed."

And Tod—not Captain Kidd—had a ringing in his ears as he sang, as he sang, and an overflow of tears as he sang. And then he ran away from school that afternoon, and sang Captain Kidd, from A to izzard, in the full hearing of the "Industrial Hive," to the very evident amusement of "the workers," and the discomfiture of the ruler of "the swarm."

The teacher called on the good minister that evening, and after a long talk on the back porch, left late in the dusk, wiping his eyes with one hand, and shaking the other very warmly with the preacher. And Tod slipped noiselessly along the roof above them, and slid down the other side, and watched the teacher's departure with a puzzled face.

Tod was at school next morning long before the call of "Books"; in fact, so early, that he availed himself of his isolated situation to chalk the handle of the teacher's pointer, to bore a gimlet-hole in the water-bucket, to slip a chip under one corner of the clock in order to tilt it out of balance and time, and in many more ingenious ways to contribute to the coming troubles of the day. The most audacious act,

however, was to climb above the teacher's desk and paste a paper scrap over a letter "o" in the motto, "Be good," that had offered him its vain advice for years. As one by one these depredations met the teacher's notice through the day, the culprit braced himself for some disastrous issue, but his only punishment was the assured glance the teacher always gave him, and the settled yet forbearing look of pain upon his face. In sheer daring Tod laughed aloud—a hollow, hungry laugh that had no mirth in it—but as suddenly subsided in a close investigation of a problem in mental arithmetic, when the teacher backed slowly toward his desk and stood covertly awaiting further developments. But Tod was left again to his own inclinations, after having, with a brazen air of innocence, solicited and gained the master's assistance in the solution of a very knotty problem, which it is needless to say he knew no more of than before. Throughout the remainder of the day Tod was thoughtful, and was evidently evolving in his mind a problem far more serious than could be found in books. Of his own accord, that evening at the close of school, he stayed in for some mysterious reason that even his own deskmate could not comprehend. When, an hour later, this latter worthy, from the old barn opposite, watched Tod and the teacher hand in hand come slowly down the walk, he whispered to himself with bated breath: "What's the durn fool up to, anyhow?"

From that time Tod grew to be a deeper mystery than he could fathom, inasmuch as some strange

spirit of industry fell upon him, and he became a student.

Though a perverse fate had seemingly decreed that Tod should remain a failure in all branches wherein most schoolboys readily succeed, he rapidly advanced in reading; and in the declamatory art he soon acquired a fame that placed him high above the reach of competitors.

Tod never cried when he got up to "speak." Tod never blanched, looked silly, and hung down his head. Tod never mumbled in an undertone, was never at a loss to use his hands, nor ever had "his piece" so poorly memorized that he must hesitate with awkward repetitions, to sit down at last in wordless misery among the unfeeling and derisive plaudits of the school. Tod, in a word, knew no such word as fail when his turn was called to entertain his hearers either with the gallant story of the youthful "Casabianca," "The Speech of Logan," or "Catiline's Defiance." Let a pupil be in training for the old-time exercises of Friday afternoon, and he was told to speak out clear and full—not hang his head—not let his arms hang down like empty sleeves,—but to stand up like a king, look everybody in the face, as though he were doing something to be proud of—in short, to take Tod for his model, and "speak out like a man"!

When Tod failed to make his appearance with his usual promptness one Friday afternoon, and the last day of the term, there was evidence of gen-

eral disappointment. Tod was to deliver an oration written especially for that occasion by the teacher. The visitors were all there—the school committee, and the minister, Tod's father, who occupied Tod's desk alone when "Books" was called. The teacher, with his pallid, care-worn face, tiptoed up and down the aisles, bending occasionally to ask a whispered question, and to let the look of anxious wonder deepen on his face as the respectful pupils shook their heads in silent response. But upon a whispered colloquy with the minister, his face brightened, as he learned that "Tod was practising his oration in the wood-house half an hour before the ringing of the bell."

A boy was sent to bring him, but returned alone, to say that he had not been able to find any trace of him.

"Oh, he'll be here in time enough," said the teacher apologetically to the sad-faced minister. "He's deeply interested in his effort for this afternoon, and I'm certain he wouldn't purposely disappoint me." The good man in reply shook his head resignedly, with a prayerful flight of the eyes indicative of long-suffering and forbearance.

The opening services of singing and prayer. No Tod.

First class in arithmetic called—examined. No Tod.

Second class, ditto; still no Tod. Primary class in ditto, composed of little twin sisters, aged six,

with very red hair and very fair skin, and very short dresses and very slim legs. Tod failed to join his class.

The long-suffering minister was ill at ease. The exercise failed in some way to appease the hunger of the soul within. He looked out of the open window nervously, and watched a saucy little sapsucker hopping up and down a tree; first up one side and then down the other, suddenly disappearing near the roots, and as suddenly surprising him with a mischievous pecking near the top fork. He thought of his poor, wayward boy, with a vague, vague hope that he might yet, in some wise ruling of a gracious Providence, escape the gallows; and with a deep sigh turned to the noisy quiet of the schoolroom; he did not even smile as he took up Tod's geography, opened at the boy's latest work,—a picture of the State seal, where a stalwart pioneer in his shirt-sleeves hacked away at a gnarled and stubborn-looking tree, without deigning to notice a stampeding herd of buffalo that dashed by in most alarming proximity. The nonchalance of the sturdy yeoman was intensified by Tod's graphic pen, which had mounted each plunging monster with a daring rider, holding a slack bridle-rein in one hand, and with the other swinging a plug-hat in the most exultant and defiant manner. This piece of grotesque art and others equally suggestive of the outcropping genius of their author, were put wearily aside, only serving, as it seemed, to deepen rather than dissolve the gloom enshrouding the good father's face. And so

the exercises wore along till recess came, and with it came the missing Tod.

"I'm in time, am I? Goody!" shouted Tod, jumping over a small boy who had stooped to pick up a slate-pencil, and stopping abruptly in front of the teacher's desk.

"Why, Tod; what in the world!"

Tod's features wore a proud, exultant smile, though somewhat glamoured with a network of spiteful-looking scratches; and his eyes were more than usually bright, although their lids were blue, and swollen to a size that half concealed them. His head, held jauntily erect, suggested nothing but boyish spirit; but his hair, tousled beyond all reason, with little wisps of it glued together with clots of blood; his best clothes soiled and torn; a bruised and naked knee showing through a straight rent across one leg of his trousers, conveyed the idea of a recent passage through some gantlet of disastrous fortune.

It was nothing, Tod said, only on his way to school he had come upon a blind man who played the fiddle and sold lead-pencils, and the boy who had been leading him had stolen something from him; and Tod had voluntarily started in pursuit of the fugitive, to overtake him only after a prolonged chase of more than a mile. "And now I've got you out o' town," said the offender, wheeling suddenly upon him, "I'll jes' meller your head fer you!" After a long pause, in which Tod's face was hidden

from the curious group about him, as the teacher bent above him at the back steps pouring water on his head, he continued: "Didn't think the little cuss was so stout! Oh! I'm scratched up, but you ought to see him! And you ought to hear him holler 'Nuff!' and you ought to see him hand over three boxes of pens and them penholders and pencils he stol'd, and a whole bunch o' envelopes; there's blood on some of 'em, and the blind man said I could keep 'em, and he give me a lead-pencil, too, with red in one end and blue in the other. Father, you sharpen it."

Tod never spoke better in his life than on that memorable afternoon—so well indeed did he acquit himself that the good old father failed to censure him that evening for the sin of fighting, and perhaps never would have done so had not the poor blind man so far forgotten the dignity of his great affliction as to get as drunk as he was blind two evenings following, and play the fiddle in front of the meeting-house during divine service.

It was in the vacation following these latter-mentioned incidents that a far more serious occurrence took place.

Tod had never seen a circus, for until this eventful epoch in our simple history the humble little village had never been honored with the presence of this "most highly moral and instructive exhibition of the age." When the grand cavalcade, with its blaring music and its richly caparisoned horses, with their nodding plumes and spangles, four abreast,

drawing the identical "fiery chariot" Tod had heard his father talk about; when all the highly painted wagons with their mysterious contents, and the cunning fairy ponies with their little, fluffy manes and flossy tails—when all this burst upon Tod's enraptured eyes, he fell mutely into place behind the band-wagon, with its myriad followers; and so, dazed, awestricken and entranced, accompanied the pageant on its grand triumphal march around the town.

Tod carried water for the animals; Tod ran errands of all kinds for the showmen; Tod looked upon the gruff, ill-tempered canvas-hand with an awe approaching reverence. Tod was going to the show, too, for he had been most fortunate in exchanging his poor services of the morning for the "open sesame" of all the dreamed-of wonders of the arena. Tod would laugh and whisper to himself, hugging the ticket closely to his palpitating side, as he ran about on errands of a hundred kinds, occupying every golden interlude of time in drawing the magic passport from his pocket and gloating over the cabalistic legend "Complimentary," with the accompanying autograph of the fat old manager with the broad, bejeweled expanse of shirt-front, and a watch-seal as big as a walnut; while on the reverse side he would glut his vision with an "exterior view of the monster pavilion," where a "girl poised high in air on a cord, in spangled dress," was kissing her hand to a mighty concourse of people, who waved their hats and handkerchiefs in wild-

est token of approval and acclaim. Nor was this the sole cause of Tod's delight, for the fat man with the big watch-seal had seemed to take a special fancy to him, and had told him he might bring a friend along, that his ticket would pass two. As the gleeful Tod was scampering off to ask the teacher if he wouldn't go, he met his anxious father in a deep state of distress, and was led home to listen in agony and tears to a dismal dissertation on the wickedness of shows, and the unending punishment awaiting the poor, giddy moths that fluttered round them. Tod was missed next morning. He had retired very early the evening previous. "He acted strange-like," said the good grandmother, recalling vaguely that he hadn't eaten any supper, "and I thought I heard him crying in the night. What was the matter with him, Isaac?"

Two weeks later Tod was discovered by his distracted father and an officer, cowering behind a roll of canvas, whereon a fat man sat declaring with a breezy nonchalance that no boy of Tod's description was "along o' this-'ere party." And the defiant Tod, when brought to light, emphatically asserted that the fat man was in nowise blamable; that he had run away on his own hook, and would do it again if he wanted to. But he broke there with a heavy sob; and the fat man said: "There! there! Cootsey, go along with the old 'un, and here's a dollar for you." And Tod cried aloud.

The good minister had brought a letter for him,

too, and as the boy read it through his tears he turned homeward almost eagerly.

DEAR TOD [it ran], I have been quite sick since you left me. You must come back, for I miss you, and I can never get well again without you. I've got a new kink on a pair of stilts I've made you, but I can't tell how long to make them till you come back. Fanny comes over every day, and talks about you so much I half believe sometimes she likes you better than she does her old sick uncle; but I can stand that, because you deserve it, and I'm too old for little girls to like very much. It'll soon be the Fourth, you know, and we must be getting ready for a big time. Come home at once, for I am waiting.

To Stoddard Anderson, from his old friend and teacher.

Tod went home. He hastened to the teacher's darkened room. The dear old face had grown pale —so very pale! The kindly hand reached out to grasp the boy's was thin and wasted, and the gentle voice that he had learned to love was faint and low —so very low, it sounded like a prayer. The good minister turned silently and left the two old friends together; and there were tear-drops in his eyes.

And so the little, staggering life went on alone. Some old woman gossip, peering through the eye of a needle on the institution known as the "Ladies' Benevolent Sewing Society," said that it 'peared to her like that boy of the preacher's jes' kep' a-pinin' and a-pinin' away like, ever sence they fetched him back from his runaway scrape. She'd seen him time and time again sence then, and although the little snipe was innocent-like to all ap-

pearances, she'd be bound that he was in devilment enough! Reckoned he was too proud to march in the school p'cession at the teacher's funer'l; and he didn't go to the meetin'-house at all, but putt off to the graveyard by hisse'f; and when they got there with the corpse, Tod was a-settin' with his legs a-hangin' in the grave, and a-pitchin' clods in, and a-smilin'. "And only jes' the other evening," she continued, "as I was comin' past there kind o' in the dusk-like, that boy was a-settin' a-straddle o' the grave, and jes' a-cryin'! And I thought it kind o' strange-like, and stopped and hollered: 'What's the matter of ye, Tod?' and he ups and hollers back: 'Stumpt my toe, durn ye!' and thinks I, 'My youngster, they'll be a day o' reckonin' fer you!'"

The old world worried on, till July came at last, and with it that most glorious day that wrapped the baby nation in its swaddling-clothes of stripes and stars and laid it in the lap of Liberty. And what a day that was! And how the birds did sing that morning from the green tops of the trees when the glad sunlight came glancing through the jeweled leaves and woke them! And not more joyous were the birds, or more riotous their little throbbing hearts to "pipe the trail and cheep and twitter twenty million loves," than the merry children that came fluttering to the grove to join their revelry.

O brighter than a dream swept the procession of children from the town toward the boy that swung his hat from the tree-top near the brook. And he flushed with some strange ecstasy as he saw

a little girl in white, with a wreath of evergreen, wave her crimson sash in answer to him, while the column slowly filed across the open bridge, where yet again he saw her reappear in the reflection in the stream below. Then, after the dull opening of prayer, and the more tedious exercises following, how the woods did ring with laughter; how the boys vied with one another in their labors of arranging swings and clearing underbrush away preparatory to a day of unconfined enjoyment; and how the girls shrieked to "see the black man coming," and how coquettishly they struggled when captured and carried off by that dread being, and yet what eagerness they displayed in his behalf! And "Ring"—men and women even joining in the game, and kissing one another's wives and husbands like mad. Why, even the ugly old gentleman with a carbuncle on the back of his neck, grew riotous with mirth, and when tripped full length upon the sward by the little widow in half-mourning, bustled nimbly to his feet and kissed her, with some wicked pun about "grass" widows, that made him laugh till his face grew as red as his carbuncle. That bashful young man who had straggled off alone, sitting so uncomfortably upon a log, killing bugs and spiders, like an ugly giant with a monster club—how he must have envied the airy freedom of those "old boys and girls."

Then there was a group of older men talking so long and earnestly about the weather and the crops that they had not discovered that the shade of the

old beech they sat beneath had stolen silently away and left them sitting in the sun, and was even then performing its refreshing office for a big, sore-eyed dog, who, with panting jaws and lolling tongue, was winking away the lives of a swarm of gnats with the most stoical indifference.

And so time wore along till dinner came, and women, with big open baskets, bent above the snowy cloths spread out upon the grass, arranging "the substantials" and the dainties of a feast too varied and too toothsome for anything but epicurean memories to describe. And then the abandon of the voracious guests! No dainty affectations—no formality—no etiquette—no anything but the full sway of healthful appetites incited by the exhilarant exercises of the day into keenest rapacity and relish.

"Don't you think it's goin' to rain?" asked some one, suddenly. A little rosy-gilled gentleman, with the aid of a chicken-leg for a lever, raised his fat face skyward, and after a serious contemplation of the clouds, wouldn't say for certain whether it would rain or not, but informed the unfortunate querist, after pulling his head into its usual position and laying down the lever to make room for a bite of bread, that "if it didn't rain there'd be a long dry spell"; and then he snorted a mimic snow-storm of bread-crumbs on his vis-à-vis, who looked wronged, and said he "guessed he'd take another piece of that-air pie down there."

It was looking very much like rain by the time the dinner things were cleared away. Anxious

mothers, with preserve-stains on their dresses, were running here and there with such exclamations to the men-folks as "Do hurry up!" and "For goodness' sake, John, take the baby till I find my parasol," and "There, Thomas, don't lug that basket off till I find my pickle-dish!"

Already the girls had left the swings, which were being taken down, and were tying handkerchiefs over their hats and standing in despairing contemplation of the ruin of their dresses. Some one called from the stand for the ladies not to be at all alarmed, it wasn't going to rain, and there wasn't a particle of danger of ——; but there a clap of thunder interrupted, and went on growling menacingly, while a little girl, with her hair blown wildly over her bare shoulders, and with a face, which a moment before glowed like her crimson scarf, now grown whiter than her snowy dress, ran past the stand and fell fainting to the ground. "Is there a doctor on the grounds?" called a loud voice in the distance, and, without waiting for a response—"For God's sake, come here quick; a boy has fallen from the swing, and maybe killed himself!"

And then the crowd gathered round him there, men with white faces, and frightened women and little, shivering children.

"Whose boy is it?"

"Hush; here comes his father." And the good minister, with stark features and clenched hands, passed through the surging throng that closed behind him even as the waves on Pharaoh.

Did I say all were excited? Not all; for there was one calm face, though very pale—paler yet for being pillowed on the green grass and the ferns.

"You mustn't move me," the boy said when he could speak; "tell 'em to come here." He smiled and tried to lift and fold his arms about his father's neck. "Poor father! poor father!" as though speaking to himself, "I always loved you, father, only you'd never believe it—never believe it. Now you will. I'll see mother, now—mother. Don't cry—I'm hurt, and I don't cry. And I'll see the teacher, too. He said I would. He said we would always be together there. Where's Fanny? Tell her—tell her—" But that strange unending silence fell upon his lips, and as the dying eyes looked up and out beyond the sighing tree-tops, he smiled to catch a gleam of sunshine through the foolish cloud that tried so hard to weep.

A REMARKABLE MAN

IN the early winter 1875, returning from a rather lengthy sojourn in the Buckeye State, where a Hoosier is scrutinized as critically as a splinter in the thumb of a near-sighted man, I mentally resolved that just as soon as the lazy engine dragging me toward home had poked its smutty nose into the selvage of my native state, I would disembark, lift my voice, and shout for joy for being safely delivered out of a land of perpetual strangers.

This opportunity was afforded me at Union City —a fussy old-hen-of-a-town, forever clucking over its little brood of railroads, as though worried to see them running over the line, and bristling with the importance of its charge.

The place is not an attractive one, as one steps from the train in the early dusk of a December evening; in fact, the immediate view of the town is almost entirely concealed by a big square-faced hotel, standing, as it were, on the very platform, as though its "runners" were behind time, and it had come down to solicit its own custom. A walk of sixty steps, however, gave me a sweeping view of the main business street of the city; and here it was,

by one of those rare freaks of circumstance, that I suddenly found myself standing face to face with an old friend. "Smith!" said I. "Correct!" said he, and all lacking to complete the tableau was the red light. And now, as my story has more to do with a more remarkable man than either Smith or myself, I shall hasten to that notable—only introducing humbler personages as necessity demands.

That night was a bragging, blustering, bullying sort of a night. The wind was mad—stark, staring mad; running over and around the town, howling and whooping like a maniac. It whirled and whizzed, and wheeled about and whizzed again. It pelted the pedestrian's face with dust that stung like sleet. It wrenched at the signs, and rattled the doors and windows till the lights inside shivered as with affright. The unfurled awnings fluttered and flapped over the deserted streets like monstrous bats or birds of prey; and, gritting their iron teeth, the shutters lunged and snapped at their fastenings convulsively. Such a night as we like to hide away from, and with a good cigar, a good friend, and a good fire, talk of soothing things and dream. My friend and I were not so isolated, however, upon this occasion; for the suddenness of the storm had driven us, for shelter, into "Bower's Emporium"; and, seated in the rear of the spacious and brightly illuminated store, we might almost dream we "dwelt in marble halls," were it not for the rather profuse display of merchandise and a voluminous complement of show-cards, reading "Bargains in Over-

coats," "Best and Cheapest Underwear," "Buy Bowers's Boots!" etc.

The clerks were all idle, and employing their leisure in listening to a "fine-art" conversation, casually introduced by my friend's remarking the extraordinary development of the bust and limbs of a *danseuse* on a paper collar-box; and after deploring the prostitution to which real talent was subjected, and satirizing the general degeneracy of modern art, he had drifted back to the rare old days of Hans Holbein, Albert Dürer, and that guild. And while dwelling enthusiastically upon the genius of Angelo, I became aware that among the listeners was a remarkable man. It was not his figure that impressed me, for that was of the ordinary mold, and rather shabbily attired in a tattered and ill-fitting coat of blue, sadly faded and buttonless; a short-waisted vest of no particular pattern, fastened together by means of a loosened loop of binding pulled through a buttonhole, and held to its place by a stumpy lead-pencil with a preponderance of rubber at the end; the pantaloons very baggy and fraying at the bottoms, as though in excessive sympathy with a pair of coarse, ungainly army shoes that wore the appearance of having been through Sherman's march to the sea.

Not remarkable, I say, in these particulars, for since "tramping" has arrived at the dignity of a profession, such characteristics are by no means uncommon; but when taken in conjunction with a head and face that would have served as model for either

Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, in patriarchal cast of feature and flow of beard, it is no wonder that my fancy saw in the figure before me a remarkable man. He stood uncovered, and in an eager listening attitude, as though drinking every syllable to the very dregs. His eyes were large and lustrous, and with that dreamy, far-off look peculiar to that quality of mind that sees what is described, even though buried in Pompeian ruins, or under the pyramids of Egypt.

He met my rather scrutinizing gaze with a friendly and forgiving expression—adding an intuitive affinity by a nestling of the palms one within the other and a genial friction indicative of warm impulse and openness, yet withal suggesting a due subservience to my own free will to accept the same as token of genuine esteem and admiration.

I thought I read his character aright in fancying, "Here is a man of more than ordinary culture and refinement," and I determined, if it were possible, to know him better. When I took an early opportunity to refer to him for information he responded eagerly, and in so profuse and elegant a style of diction that I was surprised.

He referred to Angelo as "that master whose iron pencil painted language on lips of stone, and whose crudest works in clay might well outlive the marble monuments of modern art." He glanced from one topic to another with a grace and ease that not only betokened a true mastery of the language, but an inexhaustible fund of information; nor was it long

ere my "stock in hand" had dwindled down to the insignificant "yes-and-of-course" verbosity that is not worth the giving away. He dwelt with particular fondness upon literature; frequently asking me what works I most admired, and pointing out the beauties and excellence of old authors—Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Dryden, and a host of others long dead and gone, whose works live on eternally. All these, as they were successively reviewed, he quoted in a manner that evinced a thorough knowledge of their worth.

At last, after no little artifice and strategy, I drew him to his own history, which grew fantastically interesting as he proceeded. His father, passing rich, had educated him for the ministry; but the profession did not suit him—or, rather, he did not suit the profession; for to be frank he was rather inclined in his younger days to be a "graceless dog"; and so, when it became evident that he must shift for himself, more at the instigation of literary friends than from any ambition or choice, he entered the field of journalism, beginning at the bottom of the ladder—the bottom—and gradually rising from the compositor's case to the very rung of editorial success—when there came a crash,—a flaw in the grain, my boy, a flaw in the grain—and that flaw— Well, no matter!—The noblest minds had toppled from the height, and crumbled to the merest débris of pauper intellect. The grandest tomb the finger of the nation could point out was glutted with such food. Did he not remember poor Prentice, and, in

memory, recall him now as vividly as though but yesterday, entering the sanctum of the Louisville *Journal,* with the old-time greeting: "Ah, Charles; ready for work, I see. Well, here am I—punctual as Death." And then, after a good stiff brandy, which he could hardly raise to his lips with both trembling hands, poor George! how he would dictate, so rapidly that he (Charles) could scarcely put it down, although a clever hand at writing in those days. Served as amanuensis for five years, and transcribed with his own hand, "'Tis Midnight's Holy Hour," at ten o'clock in the morning, and had the poem entire ready for the compositor at half past. At such times it was nothing uncommon for George to say, "Well done, thou Good and Faithful! the big end of the day is left you to transcribe as your pleasure may dictate. Only bear in mind, I shall expect a little gem from your individual pen for to-morrow's issue!"

"And do you write?" I broke in abruptly.

"I used to write," he answered, as though loath to make the acknowledgment—"that is, I sometimes rode Pegasus as a groom might ride his master's horse—but my flights were never high—never high!"

"For what reason, may I inquire? Surely you had no lack of inspiration with such men as Prentice about you?"

"Ay, there's the rub!" he sighed, with a negative shake. "The association of great men does not always tend to develop genius; the more especially

when one's subservient position causes one to degenerate into a mere machine. Yet I found some time, of course, for verse-making; and, chiefly owing to the kindly encouragement of Mr. Prentice, I 'gave to the world,' as he was pleased to say, many little poems; but of them those that survive to-day are vagrants, like myself, and are drifting about at the mercy of the press." Here the old man sighed heavily and mechanically fumbled his pencil.

I was growing deeply interested in the strange character before me, and although the faces of the group smiled at me significantly, I was not to be beguiled from my new acquaintance.

"There is a question," said I, "I would like to ask you, since from actual experience you are doubtless well informed upon it:—I have often heard it argued that the best productions of authors—poets in particular—are written under the influence of what they are pleased to term 'inspiration.' Can you enlighten me as to the truth of that assertion?"

"I can say in reply," said the old man, with his unwavering eyes fixed upon mine—"I can say in reply that the best productions of authors—poets in particular—*are* written under the influence of what they are pleased to term 'inspiration.' I have seen it proved."

"How proved?" I asked.

"Listen. Take, for example, an instance I will cite: A man worn and enfeebled by age, whose eyes are dimmed almost to sightlessness; whose mind, once clear and vivid as the light of day, is now wav-

ering and fickle as the wind: and yet at times this influence comes upon him like an avalanche, and as irresistible; a voice cries, 'Write! write! write!' nor does he know, when he has obeyed that summons, what his trembling hand has written. Further proof that this is divine inspiration is that his fragmentary productions will oftentimes be in the exact manner and diction of writers long since passed away; and I am satisfied they are produced at the direct dictation of the departed. I know this!"

"You astonish me," said I, in unfeigned wonder; "you say you know this—how do you know it?"

"Because I am the man."

Although the assertion, in my mind, was simply preposterous, there was a certain majesty in the utterance that held me half in awe. I looked upon him as one might look upon some curious being from an unknown world. He was moving now—pacing grotesquely up and down a little space of half a dozen steps, and wheeling, at the limits of his walk, as nimbly as the harlequin in the pantomime, and repeating, as though to himself, "I am the man; I am the man."

"Well, sir," said I, forcing myself into an air of indifference I did not feel—"well, sir, not for a moment questioning your own belief as to this strange influence which may possess you at times, you will pardon me for expressing the vaguest skepticism, since I have never been so fortunate as to witness an actual demonstration." He was about to interrupt me, but I continued coolly, "By what

circumstance is this influence introduced—or how produced—is it—"

He broke in on me with a keen little pang of a laugh that almost made me shudder. "You are my convert," he exclaimed excitedly. "Quick! Give me paper—give me paper!" But before I could take my note-book from my pocket he had hurriedly snatched a scrap of wrapping-paper from the counter, and bending over it, was writing with great rapidity.

His manner was decidedly singular. In the occasional pauses he made, he would lean his forehead in the palm of his left hand, with the fingers dancing nervously upon the bald spot on the summit of his head, while with the hand that held the pencil he kept up a continued rotary movement in the air. Then he would suddenly pounce down upon the paper before him as though in a perfect frenzy of delight, and line after line would appear as if by magic, each succeeding one preluded by that sharp little yelp of a laugh: and ere three minutes had elapsed, he had covered both sides of the paper. He then threw down his pencil, as though reluctantly, pushed me the scrap and motioned me to read.

I was at first completely mystified, for what I had confidently expected to be rhyme was prose; but ere I had examined it far I was as highly gratified as at first disappointed. The writing, although so recklessly scrawled, was quite legible, and here and there gave evidence of more than ordinary grace

and elegance; the punctuation, so far as I was able to judge, seemed perfect in every part; and, in fact, the entire production bore the appearance of having been executed by a skilful hand.

I copy it verbatim from the original scrap, which now lies before me:

By this time they had come upon the figure of the old hag, seated by the roadside, and, in a harsh, cracked voice, crooning a dismal ballad. "By God's rood," quoth the knight, in a burst of admiration, "did I not tell thee 'twas some fair princess, decoyed from her father's castle and thus transformed, through the despicable arts of some wicked enchanter; for thou hast but to perk an ear to have the sense of hearing bathed and overflowed with melody. Dost thou not also note rare grace and sweetest dignity voiced, as it were, from the very tatters that enclothe her form?" "Indeed thou mayest," said the squire; "for I have heard it said 'rags may enfold the purest gold.'—Yet in this instance I am restrained to think it more like the hidalgo's dinner—'very little meat and a good deal of tablecloth.'" "Hold thy peace, bladderhead," exclaimed the knight, "lest I make thee gnaw thy words with loosened teeth. Listen what liquid syllables are spilled upon the atmosphere:"

"My father's halls, so rich and rare,
Are desolate and bleak and bare;
My father's heart and halls are one,
Since I, their life and light, am gone.

"O, valiant knight, with hand of steel
And heart of gold, hear my appeal:
Release me from the spoiler's charms,
And bear me to my father's arms."

The knight had by this time thrown himself from his

steed, and with lance reversed and visor doffed he sank upon his knees in the slime and ooze of the dike, exclaiming: "Be of good heart, fair princess! Thy succor is at hand, since the Fates have woven thee—the pearl of pearls—into the warp and woof of my great destiny. Nay, nay! No thanks! Thy father's beaming eye alone shall be my guerdon, for home thou shalt go, even though I must needs truckle thee thither on a barrow."

"Good," said I, grasping the old man by the hand. "Hail, Cervantes!"

"Cervantes? Cervantes?" he mused, as though bewildered; "why, what have I been writing? Is it not poetry?"

"Yes," I replied enthusiastically, "both prose and poetry, and that of the rarest school. Read for yourself."

I handed him the scrap, but he pushed it from him with a gesture of impatience. "I told you once I could not read it, nor do I know what I have written. Read it aloud."

Although I hastened to comply, I did it with a decided air of incredulity as to the belief that he did not already know every word of it, and even closed with the gratuitous comment that I felt assured the quotation was perfect in every particular.

"Quotation!" repeated the old man, commiseratively; "quotation! Were you as well versed in such works, my son, as you led me at first to presume, you would know at once that not a single line of that occurs in 'Don Quixote,' although I do grant that I am the humble instrument through

which the great Cervantes has just spoken." With this remark, delivered in a half-rebuking, half-compassionate tone, he stood milking his beard and blinking at the chandelier.

I acknowledged my error, and asked pardon for the insinuation, which I begged he would believe was not intended to offend; and that, upon second thought, I was satisfied that no such matter did exist in the printed history, which fact I have since proved by a thorough investigation.

It required, however, considerable inventive tact and show of admiration to counteract the effect of my indiscreet remark; and this was not effectually accomplished until I had incidentally discovered a marked resemblance of his brow to Shakespeare's, which, by actual measurement, I found to correspond to a fraction with the measurement of the mask of that illustrious bard, as furnished by an exhaustive article I had seen a short time previous in one of our magazines.

This happily brought about the result I so much longed for, as I was extremely desirous of a further opportunity in which to study the character of this remarkable man. "Ah, Shakespeare!" said he, in a burst of genuine eloquence,—"there was a mind the gods endowed with wisdom ages have yet to learn; for bright and lustrous as it shines to-day—the Morning Star of human intellect—its glittering purity has yet a million million dawns, each brighter than the last. Its chastened rays are yet to blaze

and radiate the darkened ways— Hold! My pencil! Quick—quick!"

He snatched at the paper wildly, and bending over it, began writing with a vindictiveness of effort that was alarming. He slashed the *t*'s and stabbed the punctuation-points savagely. The writing continued, interspersed occasionally with a pause in which he would flourish his pencil like a dripping sword, only to plunge it again and again into the quivering breast of its victim. Finally he dashed it down, pushed the paper from him as one would spurn a vanquished enemy, and sank, limp and exhausted, into a chair. I snatched up the paper eagerly, and read:

Falstaff. I call him dog, forsooth, because he snarls—
Snarls, d'ye hear?—and laves his rabid fangs
In slobber-froth that drips in slimy gouts
Of venomous slander. Out upon the cur!
He sets his mangy foot upon the sod,
And grass grows rank and withers at the touch,
And tangles into wiry thatch for snakes
To spawn beneath. The very air he breathes
Becomes a poison gas, and generates
Disease and pestilence. Would he were here,
That I might whet my sword against his ribs,
Although his rotten, putrid soul unhoused
Would breed a stench worse than my barber's breath.
The dog! The damnable—

Pistol. Hist! here he comes!
God's body! master, has he overheard,
'Tis cock-crow with thy ghost!

Poins (*entering*). How now, my Jack—
Prince ass of Jacks, methought I heard thee bray.

Falstaff. Ay, well and marry! for this varlet here
Deserves more brays than praise, the scurvy dog!
Good lack! thou might'st have heard me call him dog
A pebble's toss from this; but now that thou art come,
My dagger-points of wrath do melt away
Before thy genial smile as icicles
Might ooze to nothingness at summer noon.
That other flask, you dog! and have a care
Thou handle it more gently than the first,
Lest I, as thou didst it, thy noddle burst."

Although expecting something after the Shakespearian school, I was not prepared for this, and in reading it aloud I actually found myself endeavoring to imitate the stage manner of Hackett, whom years ago I had seen in "King Henry IV" at the old Metropolitan, Indianapolis. "Ah!" said the old man, "you are more familiar with that, I see. Tell me, have you ever seen those lines in Shakespeare?" There was such a look of conscious triumph in his face, so self-satisfied an expression, that I—although half believing I was in some way being duped—could but reply that I was most thoroughly convinced the lines did not occur in any of the works of that great master.

"They do not," said the old man briefly.

"But how," said I, "is it possible for you to imitate his style so perfectly, not only in language, but theme, expression, force, character, grotesqueness—"

"Stop, my son; stop!" he broke in. "Must I again remind you that it is not imitation: I take no credit to myself—how dare I, when in writing thus my individual mind is gone, simply chaotic? It is not imitation; it is Shakespeare."

I could venture no further comment without fear of offending, and he already stood as though hesitating to depart.

"Stay, then," said I, "until I see a further exercise of this marvelous power you possess. Here, sit down, rest a while; you seem almost exhausted."

"I am nearly so," he replied, "but there is no rest for me until this influence is entirely subsided. No rest for me yet; no rest! no rest!"

He was again pacing his old walk, now like a weary sentinel, and I thought as I gazed upon him, "What riddle of the human kind is this?" Over and over again came the question; and over and over an old rhyme I had somewhere read, mockingly responded—

> "Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
> A young man will be wiser by and by;
> An old man's wit may wander ere he die."

And lulled by the mild monotony of this, I was fast drifting into a dreamy train of thought, when the old man halted suddenly, and with one elbow leaning on the counter and his head resting on his hand, he began humming a tune—a strangely sweet and tender air; low, and just a little harsh at first and indistinct, but welling softly into cadence wonder-

fully rich and pure; then quavering again in minor swoons of melody so delicately beautiful I can but liken the effect produced to that ethereal mystery of sound unraveled from the zithern by a master hand,—

"A slender thread of song in saddest tune."

I had leaned forward with my own head resting in my hand, that I might listen the better, and was not aware, until the song abruptly ended, that the old man had been writing as he sang.

"There," said he, handing me the scrap, "you have heard the tune; here are the words, perhaps."

It may have been a very foolish thing, it may have been weak and womanish, yet as my eyes bent over it and read, the lines grew curiously blurred toward the last; nor did I guess the cause until a tear—a great ripe tear-drop—fell upon my hand. And, reader, could I present the song to you just as it came to me, with all the strange surroundings—the stranger experience of the hour; the solemn silence of the group; the wailing of the wind outside as though the world, weary of itself, could only sigh, sigh, sigh!—could I prelude it with that low, sweet murmuring of melody that haunts me even now, your own eyes needs must moisten as you read:

THE HARP OF THE MINSTREL

The harp of the minstrel has never a tone
  As sad as the song in his bosom to-night,
For the magical touch of his fingers alone
  Can not waken the echoes that breathe it aright;

But oh! as the smile of the moon may impart
A sorrow to one in an alien clime,
Let the light of the melody fall on the heart,
And cadence his grief into musical rhyme.

The faces have faded, the eyes have grown dim
That once were his passionate love and his pride;
And alas! all the smiles that once blossomed for him
Have fallen away as the flowers have died.
The hands that entwined him the laureate's wreath
And crowned him with fame in the long, long ago,
Like the laurels are withered and folded beneath
The grass and the stubble—the frost and the snow.

Then sigh, if thou wilt, as the whispering strings
Strive ever in vain for the utterance clear,
And think of the sorrowful spirit that sings,
And jewel the song with the gem of a tear.
For the harp of the minstrel has never a tone
As sad as the song in his bosom to-night,
And the magical touch of his fingers alone
Can not waken the echoes that breathe it aright.

I had read the lines over to myself, and although recognizing many touches decidedly like those of the famous author of "Lalla Rookh," I was not wholly satisfied with the production; and it struck me with peculiar force that an ethereal composition would surely not be so lavishly tinctured with unutterable sorrow—aside from being far inferior to a hundred earthly songs of Moore's. So, with this argument for my weapon, I determined to conquer the superstition that had almost overpowered me. I had noticed, too, in both former instances a singu-

lar fact: The old man, though so ready to fend off all comment that might reflect a single ray of praise upon himself, listened with more of the air of a critic than one whose interest was merely that of curiosity, and still when the fragmentary productions were read aloud, a look of more than ordinary satisfaction would lighten up his eyes. The facts, hastily reviewed, determined me upon a course of action I had instant opportunity to adopt.

"Read it aloud," said the old man, impatiently; "read it aloud!"

I complied with more than usual enthusiasm, reading verbatim from the copy, until I came to the repetition of the first four lines, which I thus transposed, or, rather, paraphrased.

"The harp of the minstrel has never a *note*
As sad as the song in his bosom *expressed,*
And the magical touch of his fingers *afloat*
Drifts over the echoes that sleep in the breast."

This I was careful to deliver without emphasis or mark of any kind by which he might discover any imposition on my part. As I closed I stole a hasty glance at his face, and was gratified to find it wearing a rather startled expression: not only did his features betray a puzzled and questioning air, but his hand was mechanically extended, as though reaching for the paper in my own.

"Do you want to see it?" I asked suddenly, handing him the scrap.

"Yes, I—Oh, no—no," he broke in, dropping his

hand, and his face colored vividly. But turning again as quickly, he added: "Yes, give it to me. Where are the others? I must be going."

"Why must you go?" I asked, still retaining the scrap; "I had hoped—"

"I am going!" he interrupted bruskly, snatching up the scraps that lay upon the counter, and reaching for the one I still held. "Give me the poem. I will trouble you no longer."

"Allow me to retain it, I beg of you," said I, with a significant smile, and the slightest tinge of sarcasm in my voice. "Let me keep it as a befitting memento of the 'inspiration' I have seen so potently exercised."

His face was pale with anger as he replied:

"I will not. When you want rhyme write it yourself. You can at least write *doggerel.*"

"Very neat," said I, laughing. "We understand each other, so let's be friends. Here is my hand and a dollar besides. Give me the other scraps—I want them all."

I took them from him as he clutched at the bill, which he smothered in his palm, and then turned away without a word.

"Here, Charley," called one of the bystanders, "half of that's enough for you to-night."

The door slammed violently and he was gone.

"Old Cain will have that dollar in just five minutes," continued the man.

"And who's Old Cain?" I asked.

"Keeps the doggery just over the line."

"Old Charley" M—— is a well-known character in Union City—his home, in fact, although he often disappears for long periods, but, as my informant remarked, "always turns up again like a bad penny."

His story of his early life is at least based upon the truth, but now so highly colored it is a decidedly difficult matter to detect that simple element.

Originally he was a printer, but he early abandoned that vocation for another, and that in turn for another, and so on, until by easy gradations he had become, as the old saw has it, "Jack of all trades and master of none."

Among his many accomplishments he is a musician of considerable skill—plays the flute, violin, and guitar—all quite passably; is a great reader, a fine conversationalist—which accomplishment I personally vouch for. But chief of all his accomplishments is that of writing clever imitations of the old authors and poets. These productions he prepares with great care, commits to memory, and is ready to dispose of by as ingenious a method.

And yet, although he be a vagabond; although his friends—such as they are—are first to call him sot; although the selfish world that hurries past may jostle him unnoticed from the path; and although he styles himself a "graceless dog,"—in all candor, and in justice to my true belief, I call him a remarkable man.

AN ADJUSTABLE LUNATIC

"AN 'adjustable lunatic'?"

"Yes, sir, an adjustable lunatic—you may know I don't make a business of insanity, or I wouldn't be running at large here in the streets of the city."

It was on the morning of St. Patrick's Day. I had been drifting aimlessly around the city for hours, tossed about by the restless tide of humanity that ebbed and flowed in true sea-fashion at the Washington and Illinois street crossing. The few friends I had been fortunate enough to fall in with prior to the parade I had been unfortunate enough to lose in the flurry and excitement attending that event; and, brought to a sudden anchorage at the Bates House landing, I found myself at the mercy of a boundless throng that held not one familiar face. It was a literal jam at that juncture, and anxious and impatient as I was to break away, I was forced into a bondage which, though not exactly agreeable, was at least the source of an experience that will linger in my memory fresh and clear when every other feature of the day shall have faded.

I had been crowded into a position on a step of

the stairway that gave me a lean upon the balustrade and placed me head and shoulders above the crowd; and although I comprehended the helplessness of my position, I was, in a manner, thankful for the opportunity it afforded me to study the unsuspecting subjects just below. As my hungry eyes went foraging about from face to face they fell upon the features of an individual so singularly abstracted in appearance and so apparently oblivious to his surroundings, that I mentally congratulated him upon his enviable disposition.

He was a slender man, of thirty years, perhaps; not tall, but something over medium height; he had dark hair and eyes, with a complexion much too fair to correspond; was not richly dressed, but neatly, and in good taste.

Instinctively I wondered who and what he was; and my speculative fancy went to work and made a lawyer of him—then a minister—an artist—a musician—an actor—and a dancing-master. Suddenly I found my stare returned with equal fervor, and tried to look away, but something held me. He was elbowing his way to where I stood, and smiling as he came.

"I don't know you," he said, when, after an almost superhuman effort, he had gained my side, to the discomfiture of a brace of mangy little bootblacks that occupied the step below—"I don't know you personally, but you look bored. I'm troubled with the same disease and want company—as the poet of the Sierras wails, 'How all alone a man may

be in crowds!'" Something in the utterance made me offer him my hand.

He grasped it warmly. "It's curious," he said, "how friends are made and where true fellowship begins. Now we've known each other all our lives and never met before. What d'ye say?"

I smiled approval at the odd assertion.

"But tell me," he continued, "what conclusion you have arrived at in your study of me; come, now, be frank—what do you make of me?"

Although I found myself considerably startled, I feigned composure and acknowledged that I had been speculating as to who and what he was, but found myself unable to define a special character.

"I thought so," he said. "No one ever reads my character—no one ever will. Why, I've had phrenologists groping around among my bumps by the hour to no purpose, and physiognomists driving themselves cross-eyed; but they never found it, and they never will. The very things of which I am capable they invariably place beyond my capacity; and, with like sageness, the very things I can't do they declare me to be a master hand at. But I like to worry them; it's fun for me. Why, old Fowler himself, here the other night, thumbed my head as mellow as a May-apple, and never came within a mile of it! Some characters are readable enough, I'm willing to admit. Your face, for instance, is a bulletin-board to me, but you can't read mine, for I'm neither a doctor, lawyer, artist, actor, musician, nor anything else you may have in your

mind. You might guess your way all through the dictionary and then not get it. It's simply an impossibility, that's all."

I laughed uneasily, for although amused at the quaint humor of his language, a nervous fluttering of the eyes and a spasmodic twitching of the corners of his mouth made me think his manner merely an affectation. But I was interested, and as his conversation seemed to invite the interrogation, I flatly asked him to indulge my curiosity and tell me what he was.

"Wait till the crowd thins, and maybe I will. In the meantime here's a cigar and here's a light—as Mr. Quilp playfully remarks to Tom Scott—'Smoke away, you dog you!'"

"Well, you're a character," said I, dubiously.

"Yes," he replied, "but you can't tell what kind, and I can tell you the very trade you work at."

I smiled incredulously.

"Now don't look lofty and assume a professional air, for you're only a mechanic, and a sign-painter at that."

Although he spoke with little courtesy of address, there was a subtle something in his eye that drew me magnet-like and held me. I was silent.

"Want to know how I became aware of that fact?" he went on, with a quick, sharp glance at my bewildered face. "There's nothing wonderful about my knowing that; I've had my eye on you for two hours, and you stare at every sign-board you pass, worse than a country-jake; and once or twice I saw

you stop and study carefully some fresh design, or some new style of letter. You're a stranger here in the city, too. Want to know how I can tell? Because you walk like you were actually going some place; but I notice that you never get there, for continually crossing and recrossing streets, and back-tracking past show-windows, and congratulating yourself, doubtless, upon the thorough business air of your reflection in the plate glass. Come, we can get through now; let's walk."

I followed him unhesitatingly. To say that I was simply curious would be too mild; I was fascinated, and to that degree I actually fastened on his arm, and clung there till we had quite escaped the crowd. "I like you, some way," he said, "but you're too impulsive; you let your fancy get away with your better judgment. Now, you don't know me, and I'm even pondering whether to frankly unbosom to you, or give you the slip; and I'll not leave the proposition to you to decide, for I know you'd say 'unbosom'; so I'll think about it quietly for a while yet and give you an unbiased verdict."

We walked on in silence for the distance, perhaps, of half a dozen blocks, turning and angling about till we came upon an open stairway in an old unpainted brick building, where my strange companion seemed to pause mechanically.

"Do you live here?" I asked.

"I stay here," he replied, "for I don't call it living to be fastened up in this old sepulcher. I like it well enough at night, for then I feast and fatten on the

gloom and glower that infest it; but in the normal atmosphere of day my own room looks repellent, and I only visit it, as now, out of sheer desperation."

If I had at first been mystified with this curious being, I was by this time thoroughly bewildered. The more I studied him the more at a loss I was to fathom him; and as I stood staring blankly in his face, he exclaimed almost derisively: "You give it up, don't you?"

I nodded.

"Well," he continued, "that's a good sign, and I've concluded to 'unbosom':—I'm an adjustable lunatic."

"An 'adjustable lunatic'!" I repeated, blankly. And after the remarkable proposition that ushers in the story, he continued smilingly:

"Don't be alarmed, now, for I'm glad to assure you of the fact that I'm as harmless as a baby-butterfly. Nobody knows I'm crazy, nobody ever dreams of such a thing—and why?—Because the faculty is adjustable, don't you see, and self-controlling. I never allow it to interfere with business matters, and only let it on at leisure intervals for the amusement it affords me in the pleasurable break it makes in the monotony of a matter-of-fact existence. I'm off duty to-day—in fact, I've been off duty for a week; or, to be franker still, I lost my situation ten days ago, and I've been humoring this propensity in the meanwhile; and now, if you're inclined to go up to my room with me—the

windows are both raised, you see, and you can call for help should occasion require; people are constantly passing—if you feel inclined, I say, to go up with me, I'll do my best to entertain you. I like you, as I said before, and you can trust me, I assure you. Come."

If I were to attempt a description of the feelings that possessed me as I followed my strange acquaintance up the stairway, I should fail as utterly as one who would attempt to portray the experience of lying in a nine-days' trance, so I leave the reader's fancy to befriend me, and hasten on to more tangible matters.

We paused at the first landing, my companion unlocking a door on the right, and handing me the key with the remark: "You may feel safer with it. And don't be frightened," he continued, "when I open the door, for it always whines like somebody had stepped on its knob," and I laughed at the odd figure as he threw the door open and motioned me to enter.

It was a queer apartment, filled with a jumbled array of old chairs and stands; old trunks, a lounge, and a stack of odd-shaped packages. A frowzy carpet thrown over the floor like a blanket, and a candle-box spittoon with a broken lamp-chimney in it. A little swinging shelf of dusty books, with a railroad map pasted just above it. A narrow table with a telegraph instrument attached, and wires like ivy-vines running all about the walls; and scattered around the instrument was an end-

less array of zinc and copper scraps, and bits of brass, spiral springs, and queer-shaped little tools. A flute propped up one window, and near it, on another stand, were a cornet and an old guitar, a pencil sketch half finished, and a stuffed glove with a pencil in its fingers lying on it, a spirit-lamp, a lump of beeswax, and a hundred other odds and ends, betokening the presence of some mechanical, musical, scientific genius.

"It's a bachelor's room," said the host, noting my inquisitive air.—"It's a bachelor's room, so you'll expect no apologies. Sit down when you're through with the industrial, and turn your attention to the art department."

I followed the direction of his hand, and my eyes fell upon a painted face of such ineffable sweetness and beauty I was fairly dazed. It was not an earthly form, at least in coloring, for the features seemed to glow with beatific light. The eyes were large, dark, and dewy, thrown upward with a longing look, and filled with such intensity of tenderness one could but sigh to see them. The hair, swept negligently back, fell down the gleaming shoulders like a silken robe, and nestled in its glossy waves the ears peeped shyly out like lily-blooms. The lips were parted with an utterance that one could almost hear, and weep for because the blessed voice was mute. The hands were folded on a crumpled letter and pressed close against the heart, and a curl of golden hair was coiled around the fingers.

"Is it a creation of the fancy?" I asked.

"Well, yes," he answered, with a dreamy drawl. "I call it fancy, when in a normal state; but now," he continued, in a fainter tone, "I will designate it as a portrait." And oh, so sad, so hopeless and despairing was the utterance, it seemed to well up from the fountain of his heart like a spray of purest sorrow.

"Who painted it?" I asked.

"'Who painted it?'" he repeated, drowsily—"'who painted it?' Oh, no; I mustn't tell you that; for if I answered you with 'Raphael,' you'd say, 'Ah, no! the paint's too fresh for that, and he's been dead for ages.' 'Who painted it? No, no, I mustn't tell you that!"

"But are you not an artist?—I see an easel in the corner there, and here's a mahlstick lying on the mantel."

"I an artist? Why, man, what ails you? I told you not ten minutes since that I was an adjustable lunatic; and don't you see I am?—You can't mislead me nor throw me off my guard. When it comes to reason or solid logic, don't you find me there? And here again, to show the clearness of my judgment, I remove the cause of our little dissension, and our friendly equanimity is restored—" and he turned the picture to the wall.

I could but smile at the gravity and adroitness of his language and demeanor.

"There," said he, smiling in return; "your face is brighter than the day outside; let's change the topic. Do you like music?"

"Passionately," I responded. "Will you play?"

"No; I will sing."

He took the guitar from the table, and, with a prelude wilder than the "Witches' Dance," he sang a song he called "The Dream of Death," a grievously sad song, so full of minor tones and wailing words, the burden of it still lingers in my ears:

> "O gentle death, bow down and sip
> The soul that lingers on my lip;
> O gentle death, bow down and keep
> Eternal vigil o'er my sleep;
> For I am weary and would rest
> Forever on your loving breast."

His voice, as plaintive as a dove's, went trailing through the rondel like weariness itself; and when at last it died away in one long quaver of ecstatic melody, though I felt within my heart an echoing of grief

> "Too sweetly sad to name as pain,"

I broke the silence following to remind him of his having told me he was not a musician.

"Only a novice," he responded.—"One may twang a lute and yet not be a troubadour. By the way," he broke off abruptly, "is that expression original with me, or have I picked it up in some old book of rhyme?—Oh, yes! How do you like poetry?"

He sprang to his feet as he spoke, and without

awaiting an answer to his query went diving about in a huge waste-basket standing near the table.

"It's a thing I dislike to acknowledge," he went on, "but I don't mind telling you. The fact is, I'm a follower of Wegg and sometimes 'drop into poetry—as a friend,' you understand; and if you'll 'lend me your ears,' I'll give you a specimen of my versification."

He had drawn up a roll of paper from the débris of the basket, and unrolling it with a flourish, and a mock-heroic air of inspiration, he read as follows:

"A fantasy that came to me
  As wild and wantonly designed
As ever any dream might be
  Unraveled from a madman's mind,—
A tangle-work of tissue, wrought
  By cunning of the spider-brain,
  And woven, in an hour of pain,
To trap the giddy flies of thought——."

He paused, and with a look of almost wild entreaty he pleaded: "You understand it, don't you?"

I nodded hesitatingly.

"Why, certainly you do. The meaning's the plainest thing in it. What's your idea of its meaning? tell me!—Why don't you tell me!"

"Read it again that I may note it carefully."

He repeated it.

"Why," said I, "it appears to me to be the introduction to a poem written under peculiar circumstances, and containing, perhaps, some strange ideas

that the author would excuse for the reason of their coming in the way they did."

"Right!" he exclaimed, joyously; "and now if you'll give me your most critical attention, and promise not to interrupt, I'll read the poem entire."

"Go on," I said, for I was far more eager to listen than I would have him know.

"And will you excuse any little wildness of gesture or expression that I may see fit to introduce in the rendition?"

"Certainly," said I, "certainly; go on!"

"And you won't interrupt or get excited? Light another cigar; and here's a chair to throw your feet across. Now, unbutton your coat and lean back. Are you thoroughly comfortable?"

"Thoroughly," said I, impatiently—"a thousand thoroughlies."

"All right," he said; "I'm glad to hear you say it; but before I proceed I desire to call your attention to the fact that this poem is a literary orphan —a foundling, you understand?"

"I understand; go on."

And with a manner all too wild to be described, he read, or rather recited, the following monstrosity of rhyme:

"I stood beneath a summer moon
All swollen to uncanny girth,
And hanging, like the sun at noon,
Above the center of the earth;
But with a sad and sallow light,
As it had sickened of the night

And fallen in a pallid swoon.
Around me I could hear the rush
  Of sullen winds, and feel the whir
Of unseen wings apast me brush
  Like phantoms round a sepulcher;
And, like a carpeting of plush,
  A lawn unrolled beneath my feet,
  Bespangled o'er with flowers as sweet
  To look upon as those that nod
  Within the garden-fields of God,
  But odorless as those that blow
  In ashes in the shades below.

"And on my hearing fell a storm
  Of gusty music, sadder yet
  Than every whimper of regret
That sobbing utterance could form,
  And patched with scraps of sound that seemed
  Torn out of tunes that demons dreamed,
  And pitched to such a piercing key,
  It stabbed the ear with agony;
  And when at last it lulled and died,
  I stood aghast and terrified.
I shuddered and I shut my eyes,
  And still could see, and feel aware
  Some mystic presence waited there;
And staring, with a dazed surprise,
  I saw a creature so divine
  That never subtle thought of mine
  May reproduce to inner sight
  So fair a vision of delight.

"A syllable of dew that drips
From out a lily's laughing lips
Could not be sweeter than the word
I listened to, yet never heard.—
For, oh, the woman hiding there
Within the shadows of her hair,

Spake to me in an undertone
So delicate, my soul alone
But understood it as a moan
Of some weak melody of wind
A heavenward breeze had left behind.

"A tracery of trees, grotesque
  Against the sky, behind her seen,
Like shapeless shapes of arabesque
  Wrought in an oriental screen;
And tall, austere and statuesque
  She loomed before it—e'en as though
  The spirit-hand of Angelo
  Had chiseled her to life complete,
  With chips of moonshine round her feet.
And I grew jealous of the dusk,
  To see it softly touch her face,
  As lover-like, with fond embrace,
It folded round her like a husk:
But when the glitter of her hand,
  Like wasted glory, beckoned me,
  My eyes grew blurred and dull and dim—
  My vision failed—I could not see—
I could not stir—I could but stand,
  Till, quivering in every limb,
  I flung me prone, as though to swim
  The tide of grass whose waves of green
  Went rolling ocean-wide between
  My helpless shipwrecked heart and her
  Who claimed me for a worshiper.

"And writhing thus in my despair,
  I heard a weird, unearthly sound,
  That seemed to lift me from the ground
And hold me floating in the air.
I looked, and lo! I saw her bow
  Above a harp within her hands;
A crown of blossoms bound her brow,

And on her harp were twisted strands
Of silken starlight, rippling o'er
With music never heard before
By mortal ears; and, at the strain,
I felt my Spirit snap its chain
And break away,—and I could see
It as it turned and fled from me
To greet its mistress, where she smiled
To see the phantom dancing wild
And wizard-like before the spell
Her mystic fingers knew so well."

I sat throughout it all as though under the strange influence of an Eastern drug. My fancy was so wrought upon I only saw the reader mistily, and clothed, as it were, in a bedragoned costume of the Orient. My mind seemed idle—steeped in drowse and languor, and yet peopled with a thousand shadowy fancies that came trooping from chaotic hiding-places, and mingling in a revelry of such riotous extravagance it seemed a holiday of elfish thought.

I shook my head, I rubbed my eyes, arose bewildered, and sat down again; arose again and walked across the room, my strange companion following every motion with an intensity of gaze almost mesmeric.

"You fail to comprehend it?" he queried.

I shook my head.

"You can almost grasp it, can't you?"

"Yes," I answered.

"But not quite?"

"Not quite."

"Does it worry you?"

"Yes."

"Think it will cling to you, and fret you, vex you, haunt you?"

"I know it will."

"Think you'll ever fully comprehend it?"

"I can't say," I replied, thoughtfully.—"Perhaps I may in time. Will you allow me to copy it?"

"What do you want with it?"

"I want to study it," I replied.

"And you're sure you don't understand it, and it worries you, and frets you, and vexes you, and haunts you? Good! I'll read you the final clause now; that may throw a light of some kind on it"; and, opening the scroll, again he read:

> "What is it? Who will rightly guess
> If it be aught but nothingness
> That dribbles from a wayward pen
> To spatter in the eyes of men?
> What matter! I will call it mine,
> And I will take the changeling home
> And bathe its face with morning-shine,
> And comb it with a golden comb
> Till every tangled tress of rhyme
> Will fairer be than summer-time:
> And I will nurse it on my knee,
> And dandle it beyond the clasp
> Of hands that grip and hands that grasp,
> Through life and all eternity!"

"Now what do you think of it?" he asked with a savageness that startled me.

"I am more at sea than ever," I replied.

"Well, I wish you a prosperous voyage! Here's the poem; I've another copy. 'Read and reflect,' as the railroad poster says, but don't you publish it—at least while I'm alive, for I've no thirst for literary fame—I only write for home-use; but you're a good fellow, and I like you for all your weak points, and I trust the confidence I repose will not be disregarded. Come!"

He had opened the door and was holding out his hand for the key.

I gave it to him and followed out mechanically. He left the door ajar and followed to the bottom of the stairs.

"And now if you'll pardon me," he said, "I'll say good-by to you here; I've some packing to do and ought to be at it."

"Why, you're not going to leave the city?" I asked.

"Well, no, not to-day; but the jig's up with me here, and it's only a question of time—I can't hold out much longer—as our rural friend remarks, 'Money matters is mighty sceerce'; and if I don't pull out shortly I'll have to 'fold my tent like the Bedouin and silently plagiarize away!'"

"If I could be of any assistance to you—" I began, but he checked me abruptly with, "Oh, no, I don't require it, I assure you; I've two dollars to your one, doubtless. Thank you just the same, and good-by. Here's my card; it's not my name, however, but it'll answer; I'll not see you again, though

you should live to be as bald as a brickyard, for, my dear young friend, I'm going away. Good-by, and may all good things overtake you!"

He gripped my hand like a vise, and turning quickly, went skipping up the stairway two steps at a time.

"Good-by!" I called to him, sorrowfully; then turned reluctantly away, examining the card he had given me, which, to my astonishment, was not his card at all, but a railroad ticket entitling the bearer to a ride from Danville, Illinois, to York, Pennsylvania; this fact I remember quite distinctly, as I read it over and over, revolving in my mind the impression that this was but another instance of his eccentricity, or perhaps a trick by which I might be victimized in some undreamed-of way. But upon second thought I concluded it to be simply a mistake, and so turned back and called him to the window above and explained.

He came down and begged my pardon for the trouble he had given me, took the ticket, thanked me, and said good-by again.

"But," said I, "you haven't given me your real card in exchange."

"Oh, no matter!" he said smilingly. "Call me Smith, Jones or Robinson, it's all the same; good-by, and don't forget your old friend and well-wisher, the Adjustable Lunatic." And even thus he vanished from my sight forever.

The remainder of the day and half of the night I spent in studious contemplation of the curious com-

position, but without arriving at any tangible conclusion. I am still engaged with my investigation. Sometimes the meaning seems almost within my mental grasp; but, balancing, adjusting, and comparing its many curious bearings, I find my judgment persistently at fault. It has puzzled and bewildered me for weeks. No line of it but canters through my brain like a fractious nightmare; no syllable but fastens on my fancy like a leech, and sucks away the life-blood of my every thought. I am troubled, worried, fretted, vexed, and haunted; and I write this now in the earnest hope that wiser minds may have an opportunity of making it a subject of investigation, and because one week ago today my eyes fell upon the following special telegram to *The Indianapolis Journal:*

PERU, IND., April 12.—An unknown man committed suicide in the eastward-bound train on the Wabash road, just below Waverly, at about 11 o'clock this morning. He had in his possession, besides the revolver with which he shot himself, a ticket from Danville, Illinois, to York, Pennsylvania, a gold watch, $19 in money, a small valise, and some letters and other papers which indicated his name to be George S. Clofling.

He was shot twice in the region of the heart, and his revolver showed that between the first and last shots two cartridges missed fire.

TWIGGS AND TUDENS

IF my old school-chum and roommate John Skinner is alive to-day—and no doubt he *is* alive, and quite so, being, when last heard from, the very alert and effective train despatcher at Butler, Indiana,—he will not have forgotten a certain night, that of June the eighth, 1870, in "Old Number 'Leven" of the Dunbar House, Greenfield, when he and I sat the long night through, getting ready a famous issue of our old school-paper, "The Criterion." And he will remember, too, the queer old man who occupied, but that one night, the room just opposite our own, "Number 13." For reasons wholly aside from any superstitious dread connected with the numerals, Thirteen was not a desirable room; its locality was alien to all accommodations, and its comforts, like its furnishings, were extremely meager. In fact, it was the room usually assigned to the tramp-printer, who, in those days, was an institution; or again, it was the local habitation of the oft-recurring transient customer who was too incapacitated to select a room himself when he retired—or rather, when he was personally retired by "the hostler," as the gentlemanly night clerk of that era was habitually designated.

As both Skinner and myself—between fitful terms of school—had respectively served as "printer's devil" in the two rival newspaper offices of the town, it was natural for us to find a ready interest in anything pertaining to the newspaper business; and so it was, perhaps, that we had been selected, by our own approval and that of our fellow students of the graded schools, to fill the rather exalted office of editing "The Criterion." Certain it is that the rather abrupt rise from the lowly duties of the "roller" to the editorial management of a paper of our own (even if issued in handwriting) we accepted as a natural right; and, vested in our new power of office, we were largely "shaping the whisper of the throne" about our way.

And upon this particular evening it was, as John and I had fairly squared ourselves for the work of the night, that we heard the clatter and shuffle of feet on the side stairs, and, an instant later, the hostler establishing some poor unfortunate in Thirteen, just across the hall.

"Listen!" said John, as we heard an old man's voice through the open transom of our door,—"listen at that!"

It was an utterance peculiarly refined, in language as well as intonation. A low, mild, rather apologetic voice, gently assuring the hostler that "everything was very snug and comfortable indeed—so far as the *compartment* was concerned—but would not the *attendant* kindly supply a better light, together with pen-and-ink—and just a sheet or two

of paper,—if he would be so very good as to find a pardon for so very troublesome a guest."

"Hain't no writin'-paper," said the hostler, briefly,—"and the big lamps is all in use. These fellers here in 'Leven might let you have some paper and—Hain't *you* got a lead-pencil?"

"Oh, no matter!" came the impatient yet kindly answer of the old voice—"no matter at all, my good fellow!—Good night—good night!"

We waited till the sullen, clumpy footsteps down the hall and stair had died away.

Then Skinner, with a handful of foolscap, opened our door; and, with an indorsing smile from me, crossed the hall and tapped at Thirteen—was admitted—entered, and very quietly closed the door behind him, evidently that I might not be disturbed.

I wrote on in silence for quite a time. It was, in fact, a full half-hour before John had returned,—and with a face and eye absolutely blazing with delight.

"An old printer," whispered John, answering my look,—"and we're in luck:—He's a *genius,* 'y God! and an Englishman, and knows Dickens *personally* —used to write races with him, and's got a manuscript of his in his 'portmanteau,' as he calls an old oil-cloth knapsack with one lung clean gone. Excuse this extra light.—Old man's lamp's like a sore eye, and he's going to touch up the Dickens sketch for *us! Hear?—For us*—for "The Criterion." Says he can't sleep—he's in distress—has a presentiment

—some dear friend is dying—or dead now—and he must write—*write!*"

This is, in briefest outline, the curious history of the subjoined sketch, especially curious for the reason that the following morning's cablegram announced that the great novelist, Charles Dickens, had been stricken suddenly and seriously the night previous. On the day of this announcement—even as "The Criterion" was being read to perfunctorily interested visitors of the Greenfield graded schools —came the further announcement of Mr. Dickens' death. The old printer's manuscript, here reproduced, is, as originally, captioned—

TWIGGS AND TUDENS

"Now who'd want a more cozier little home than me and Tude's got here?" asked Mr. Twiggs, as his twinkling eyes swept caressingly around the cheery little room in which he, alone, stood one chill December evening as the great Saint Paul's was drawling six.

"This ain't nó princely hall with all its gorgeous paraphanaly, as the play-bills says; but it's what I calls a' 'interior,' which for meller comfort and cheerful surroundin's ain't to be ekalled by no other 'flat' on the boundless, never-endin' stage of this existence!" And as the exuberant Mr. Twiggs rendered this observation, he felt called upon to smile and bow most graciously to an invisible audience, whose wild approval he in turn interpreted by an

enthusiastic clapping of his hands and the cry of "Ongcore!" in a dozen different keys—this strange acclamation being made the more grotesque by a great green parrot perched upon the mantel, which, in a voice less musical than penetrating, chimed in with "Hooray for Twiggs and Tudens!" a very great number of times.

"Tude's a queer girl," said Mr. Twiggs, subsiding into a reflective calm, broken only by the puffing of his pipe, and the occasional articulation of a thought, as it loitered through his mind. "Tude's a queer girl!—a werry queer girl!" repeated Mr. Twiggs, pausing again, with a long whiff at his pipe, and marking the graceful swoop the smoke made as it dipped and disappeared up the wide, black-throated chimney; and then, as though dropping into confidence with the great fat kettle on the coals, that steamed and bubbled with some inner paroxysm, he added, "And queer and nothink short, is the lines for Tude, eh?

"Now s'posin'," he continued, leaning forward and speaking in a tone whose careful intonation might have suggested a more than ordinary depth of wisdom and sagacity,—"s'posin' a pore chap like me, as ain't no property only this-'ere 'little crooked house,' as Tude calls it, and some o' the properties I 'andles at the Drury—as I was a-sayin',—s'posin' now a' old rough chap like me was jest to tell her all about herself, and who she is and all, and not no kith or kin o' mine, let alone a daughter, as *she* thinks—What do you reckon now

'ud be the upshot, eh?" And as Mr. Twiggs propounded this mysterious query he jabbed the poker prankishly in the short-ribs of the grate, at which the pot, as though humoring a joke it failed to comprehend wholly, set up a chuckling of such asthmatic violence that its smothered cachinnations tilted its copper lid till Mr. Twiggs was obliged to dash a cup of water in its face.

"And Tude's a-comin' of a' age, too," continued Mr. Twiggs, "when a more tenderer pertecter than a father, so to speak, wouldn't be out o' keepin' with the nat'ral order o' things, seein' as how she's sort o' startin' for herself-like now. And it's a question in my mind, if it ain't my bounden duty as her father—or ruther, who has been a father to her all her life—to kind o' tell her jest how things is, and all—and how *I* am, and everythink,—and how I feel as though I ort'o stand by her, as I allus have, and allus *have* had her welfare in view, and kind o' feel as how I allus—ort'o kind o'—ort'o kind o' "—and here Mr. Twiggs' voice fell into silence so abruptly that the drowsy parrot started from its trance-like quiet and cried "Ortokindo! Ortokindo!" with such a strength of seeming mockery that it was brushed violently to the floor by the angry hand of Mr. Twiggs and went backing awkwardly beneath the table.

"Blow me," said Mr. Twiggs, "if the knowin' impidence of that-'ere bird ain't astonishin'!" And then, after a serious controversy with the draught of his pipe, he went on with his deliberations.

"Lor'! it were jest scrumptious to see Tude in 'The Iron Chest' last night! Now, I ain't no actur myself,—I've been on, of course, a thousand times as 'fillin',' 'sogers' and 'peasants' and the like, where I never had no lines, on'y in the 'choruses'; but if I don't know nothin' but 'All hail!—All hail!' I've had the experience of bein' under the baleful hinfluence of the hoppery-glass, and I'm free to say it air a ticklish position and no mistake. But *Tude!* w'y, bless you, she warn't the first bit flustered, was she? 'Peared-like she jest felt perfectly at home-like—like her mother afore her! And I'm dashed if I didn't feel the cold chills a-creepin' and a-crawlin' when she was a-singin' 'Down by the river there grows a green willer and a-weepin' all night with the bank for her piller'; and when she come to the part about wantin' to be buried there 'while the winds was a-blowin' close by the stream where her tears was a-flowin', and over her corpse to keep the green willers growin',' I'm d—d if I didn't blubber right out!" And as the highly sympathetic Mr. Twiggs delivered this acknowledgment, he stroked the inner corners of his eyes, and rubbed his thumb and finger on his trousers.

"It were a tryin' thing, though," he went on, his mellow features settling into a look not at all in keeping with his shiny complexion—"it were a tryin' thing, and it *air* a tryin' thing to see them lovely arms o' hern a-twinin' so lovin'-like around that-'ere Stanley's neck and a-kissin' of him—as she's obleeged to do, of course—as the 'properties' of the

play demands; but I'm blowed if she wouldn't do it quite as nat'ral-like I'd feel easier. Blow me!" he broke off savagely, starting up and flinging his pipe in the ashes, "I'm about a-comin' to the conclusion I ain't got no more courage'n a blasted schoolboy! Here I am old enough to be her father—mighty nigh it—and yet I'm actually afeard to speak up and tell her jest how things is, and all, and how I feel like I—like I—ort'o—ort'o—"

"Ortokindo! Ortokindo!" shrieked the parrot, clinging in a reversed position to the under round of a chair.—*"Ortokindo! Ortokindo! Tude's come home!—Tude's come home!"* And as though in happy proof of this latter assertion, the gentle Mr. Twiggs found his chubby neck encircled by a pair of rosy arms, and felt upon his cheek the sudden pressure of a pair of lips that thrilled his old heart to the core. And then the noisy bird dropped from its perch and marched pompously from its place of concealment, trailing its rusty wings and shrieking, "Tude's come home!" at the top of its brazen voice.

"Shet up!" screamed Mr. Twiggs, with a pretended gust of rage, kicking lamely at the feathered oracle; "I'll 'Tude's-come-home' ye! W'y, a feller can't hear his *ears* for your infernal squawkin'!" And then, turning toward the serious eyes that peered rebukingly into his own, his voice fell gentle as a woman's: "Well, there, Tudens, I beg pardning; I do indeed. Don't look at me thataway. I know I'm a great, rough, good-for—" But a warm,

swift kiss cut short the utterance; and as the girl drew back, still holding the bright old face between her tender palms, he said simply, "You're a queer girl, Tudens; a queer girl."

"Ha! am I?" said the girl, in quite evident heroics and quotation, starting back with a theatrical flourish and falling into a fantastic attitude.—"'Troth, I am sorry for it; me poor father's heart is bursting with gratichude, and he would fain ease it by pouring out his thanks to his benefactor.'"

"Werry good! Werry good, indeed!" said Mr. Twiggs, gazing wistfully upon the graceful figure of the girl. "You're a-growin' more wonderful' clever in your 'presence' every day, Tude. You don't think o' nothink else but your actin', do ye, now?" And, as Mr. Twiggs concluded his observations, a something very like a sigh came faltering from his lips.

"Why, listen there! Ah-ha!" laughed Tude, clapping her hands and dancing gaily around his chair.—"Why, you old melancholy Dane, you!—are you actually *sighing?*" Then, dropping into a tragic air of deep contrition, she continued: "'But, believe me, I would not question you, but to console you, Wilford. I would scorn to pry into any one's grief, much more yours, Wilford, to satisfy a busy curiosity.'"

"Oh, don't, Tude; don't *rehearse* like that at me!—I can't a-bear it." And the serious Mr. Twiggs held out his hand as though warding off a blow.

At this appeal the girl's demeanor changed to one of tenderest solicitude.

"Why, Pop'm," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder, "I did not mean to vex you—forgive me. I was only trying to be happy, as I ought, although my own heart is this very minute heavy—very heavy—very.—No, no; I don't mean that—but, Father, Father, I have not been dutiful."

"W'y, yes, you have," broke in Mr. Twiggs, smothering the heavy exclamation in his handkerchief. "You ain't been undutiful, nor nothink else. You're jest all and everythink that heart could wish. It's all my own fault, Tudens; it's all my fault. You see, I git to thinkin' sometimes like I was a-goin' to *lose* you; and now that you are a-comin' on in years, and gittin' such a fine start, and all, and position and everythink.—Yes-sir! *position,* 'cause everybody likes you, Tudens. You know that; and I'm that proud of you and all, and that selfish, that its onpossible I could ever, ever give you up;—never, never, *ever* give you up!" And Mr. Twiggs again stifled his voice in his handkerchief and blew his nose with prolonged violence.

It may have been the melancholy ticking of the clock, as it grated on the silence following, it may have been the gathering darkness of the room, or the plaintive sighing of the rising wind without, that caused the girl to shudder as she stooped to kiss the kind old face bent forward in the shadows, and turned with feigned gaiety to the simple task of

arranging supper. But when, a few minutes later, she announced that Twiggs' and Tudens' tea was waiting, the two smilingly sat down, Mr. Twiggs remarking that if he only knew a blessing, he'd ask it upon that occasion most certainly.

"—For on'y look at these-'ere 'am and eggs," he said, admiringly: "I'd like to know if the Queen herself could cook 'em to a nicer turn, or serve 'em up more tantaliz-in'er to the palate. And this-'ere soup,—or whatever it is, is rich as gravy; and these boughten rolls ain't a bad thing either, split in two and toasted as you do 'em, air they, Tude?" And as Mr. Twiggs glanced inquiringly at his companion, he found her staring vacantly at her plate. "I was jest a-sayin', Tudens—" he went on, pretending to blow his tea and glancing cautiously across his saucer.

"Yes, Pop'm, I heard you;—we really *ought* to have a blessing, by all means."

Mr. Twiggs put down his tea without tasting it. "Tudens," he said, after a long pause, in which he carefully buttered a piece of toast for the second time,—"Tudens, I'm most afeard you didn't grasp that last remark of mine: I was a-sayin'—"

"Well—" said Tudens, attentively.

"I was a-sayin'," said Mr. Twiggs, averting his face and staring stoically at his toast—"I was a-sayin' that you was a-gittin' now to be quite a young woman."

"Oh, so you were," said Tudens, with charming naïveté.

"Tudens"

"Well," said Mr. Twiggs, repentantly, but with a humorous twinkle, "if I wasn't a-sayin' of it, I was *a-thinkin'* it."—And then, running along hurriedly, "And I've been a-thinkin' it for days and days—ever sence you left the 'balley' and went in 'chambermaids,' and last in leadin' rôles. Maybe *you* ain't noticed it, but I've had my eyes on you from the 'flies' and the 'wings'; and jest betwixt us, Tudens, and not for me as ort to know better, and does know better, to go a-flatterin', at my time o'—or to go a-flatterin' anybody, as I said, after you're a-gittin' to be a young woman—and what's more, a werry *'andsome* young woman!"

"Why, Pop'm!" exclaimed Tudens, blushing.

"Yes, you are, Tudens, and I mean it, every word of it; and as I was a-goin' on to say, I've been a-watchin' of you, and a-layin' off a long time jest to tell you sommat that will make your eyes open wider 'an that! What I mean," said Mr. Twiggs, coughing vehemently and pushing his chair back from the table—"what I mean is, you'll soon be old enough to be a-settin' up for yourself-like, and a-marry'—W'y, Tudens, what *ails* you?" The girl had risen to her feet, and, with a face dead white and lips all tremulous, stood clinging to her chair for support. "What ails you, Tudens?" repeated Mr. Twiggs, rising to his feet and gazing on her with a curious expression of alarm and tenderness.

"Nothing serious, dear Pop'm," said Tudens, with a flighty little laugh,—"only it just flashed on me

all at once that I'd clean forgotten poor Dick's supper." And as she turned abruptly to the parrot, cooing and clucking to him playfully,—up, up from some hitherto undreamed-of depth within the yearning heart of Mr. Twiggs mutely welled the old utterance, "Tude's a queer girl!"

"Whatever made you think of such a thing, Father?" called Tudens, gaily; and then, without waiting for an answer, went on cooing to the parrot,—"Hey, old dicky-bird! do *you* think Tudens is a handsome young woman? and do *you* think Tudens is old enough to marry, eh?" This query delivered, she broke into a fit of merriment which so wrought upon the susceptibilities of the bird that he was heard repeatedly to declare and affirm, in most positive and unequivocal terms, that Tude had actually come home.

"Yes—*sir,* Tudens!" broke in Mr. Twiggs at last, lighting a fresh churchwarden and settling into his old position at the grate; "have your laugh out over it now, but it's a werry serious fact, for all that."

"I know it, Father," said the girl, recovering her gravity, turning her large eyes lovingly upon him and speaking very tenderly. "I know it—oh, I know it; and many, many times when I have thought of it, and then again of your old kindly faith; all the warm wealth of your love; and our old home here, and all the happiness it ever held for me and you alike—oh, I have tried hard—indeed, indeed I have—to put all other thought away and live

for you alone! But, Pop'm! dear old Pop'm—" And even as the great strong breast made shelter for her own, the woman's heart within her flowed away in mists of gracious tears.

"Couldn't live without old Pop'm, could her?" half cried and laughed the happy Mr. Twiggs, tangling his clumsy fingers in the long dark hair that fell across his arm, and bending till his glad face touched her own.—"Couldn't live without old Pop'm?"

"Never! never!" sobbed the girl, lifting her brimming eyes and gazing in the kind old face. "Oh, may I always live with you, Pop'm? Always?—Forever?—"

"—And a day!" said Mr. Twiggs, emphatically.

"Even after I'm—" and she hid her face again.

"Even after—*what,* Tudens?"

"After I'm—after I'm—married?" murmured Tudens, with a longing pressure.

"Nothink short!" said Mr. Twiggs;—"perwidin'," he added, releasing one hand and smoothing back his scanty hair—"perwidin', of course, that your man is a' honest, straitforrerd feller, as ain't no lordly notions nor nothink o' that sort."

"Nor rich?"

"Well, I ain't so p'ticklar about his bein' *pore,* adzackly.—Say a feller as works for his livin', and knows how to 'usband his earnin's thrifty-like, and allus 'as a hextry crown or two laid up against a rainy day—and a good perwider, of course," said

Mr. Twiggs, with a comfortable glance around the room.—"'Ll blow me if I didn't see a face there a-peerin' in the winder!"

"Oh, no, you didn't," said the girl, without raising her head. "Go on—'and a good provider—'"

"—A good perwider," continued Mr. Twiggs; "and a feller, of course, as has a' eye out for the substantials of this life, and ain't afeard o' work—that's the idear! that's the idear!" said Mr. Twiggs, by way of sweeping conclusion.

"And that's all old Pop'm asks, after all?" queried the girl, with her radiant face wistful as his own.

"W'y, certainly!" said Mr. Twiggs, with heartiness. "Ain't that all and everythink to make home happy?"—catching her face between his great brown hands and kissing her triumphantly.

"Hooray for Twiggs-and Twiggs-and Twiggs-and—" cootered the drowsy bird, disjointedly.

The girl had risen.—"And you'll forgive me for marrying such a man?"

"Won't I?" said Mr. Twiggs, with a rapturous twinkle.

As he spoke, she flung her arms about his neck and pressed her lips close, close against his cheek, her own glad face now fronting the little window. . . . She heard the clicking of the latch, the opening of the door, and the step of the intruder ere she loosed her hold.

"God bless you, Pop'm, and forgive me!—This is my husband."

The newcomer, Mr. Stanley, reached and grasped the hand of Mr. Twiggs, eagerly, fervidly, albeit the face he looked on then will haunt him to the hour of his death.—Yet haply, some day, when the Master takes the selfsame hand within his own and whispers, "Tude's come home," the old smile will return.

AN OLD SETTLER'S STORY

WILLIAM WILLIAMS his name was—er so he said;—Bill Williams they called him, and them 'at knowed him best called him Bill Bills.

The first I seed o' Bills was about two weeks after he got here. The Settlement wasn't nothin' but a baby in them days, fer I mind 'at old Ezry Sturgiss had jest got his saw and griss-mill a-goin', and Bills had come along and claimed to know all about millin', and got a job with him; and millers in them times was wanted worse'n congerssmen, and I reckon got better wages; fer afore Ezry built, there wasn't a dust o' meal er flour to be had short o' the White Water, better'n sixty mil'd from here, the way we had to fetch it. And they used to come to Ezry's fer their grindin' as fur as that; and one feller I knowed to come from what used to be the old South Fork, over eighty mil'd from here, and in the wettest, rainyest weather; and mud! *Law!*

Well, this-here Bills was a-workin' fer Ezry at the time—part the time a-grindin', and part the time a-lookin' after the sawin', and gittin' out timber and the like. Bills was a queer-lookin' feller, shore: About as tall a build man as Tom Carter—but of course you don't know nothin' o' Tom Car-

ter. A great big hulk of a feller, Tom was; and as fur back as Fifty-eight used to make his brags that he could cut and putt up his seven cord a day.

Well, what give Bills this queer look, as I was a-goin' on to say, was a great big ugly scar a-runnin' from the corner o' one eye clean down his face and neck, and I don't know how fur down his breast—awful lookin'; and he never shaved, and there wasn't a hair a-growin' in that scar, and it looked like a—some kind o' pizen snake er somepin' a-crawlin' in the grass and weeds. I never seed sich a' out-and-out ornry-lookin' chap, and I'll never fergit the first time I set eyes on him.

Steve and me—Steve was my youngest brother; Steve's be'n in Californy now fer, le' me see,—well, anyways, I rickon, over thirty year.—Steve was a-drivin' the team at the time—I allus let Steve drive; 'peared like Steve was made a-purpose fer hosses. The beatin'est hand with hosses 'at ever you *did* see and-I-know! W'y, a hoss, after he got kind o' used to Steve a-handlin' of him, would do anything fer *him!* And I've knowed that boy to swap fer hosses 'at couldn't hardly make a shadder; and, afore you knowed it, Steve would have 'em a-ca-vortin' around a-lookin' as peert and fat and slick!

Well, we'd come over to Ezry's fer some grindin' that day; and Steve wanted to price some lumber fer a house, intendin' to marry that fall—and would a-married, I reckon, ef the girl hadn't a-died jest as she'd got her weddin' clothes done—and that set hard on Steve fer a while. Yit he rallied, you know,

as a youngster will; but he never married, someway —never married. Reckon he never found no other woman he could love well enough—'less it was—well, no odds.—The Good Bein's jedge o' what's best fer each and all.

We lived *then* about eight mil'd from Ezry's and it tuck about a day to make the trip; so you kin kind o' git an idy o' how the roads was in them days.

Well, on the way over I noticed Steve was mighty quiet-like, but I didn't think nothin' of it, tel at last he says, says he, "Ben, I want you to kind o' keep an eye out fer Ezry's new hand"—meanin' Bills. And then I kind o' suspicioned somepin' o' nother was up betwixt 'em; and shore enough there was, as I found out afore the day was over.

I knowed 'at Bills was a mean sort of a man, from what I'd heerd. His name was all over the neighberhood afore he'd be'n here two weeks.

In the first place, he come in a suspicious sort o' way: Him and his wife, and a little baby on'y a few months old, come through in a kivvered wagon with a fambly a-goin' some'eres in The Illinoy; and they stopped at the mill, fer some meal er somepin', and Bills got to talkin' with Ezry 'bout millin', and one thing o' nother, and said he was expeerenced some 'bout a mill hisse'f, and told Ezry ef he'd give him work he'd stop; said his wife and baby wasn't strong enough to stand trav'lin', and ef Ezry'd give him work he was ready to lick into it then and there; said his woman could pay her board by sewin' and the like, tel they got ahead a little; and then,

ef he liked the neighberhood, he said he'd as lif settle there as anywheres; he was huntin' a home, he said, and the outlook kind o' struck him, and his woman railly needed rest, and wasn't strong enough to go much furder. And old Ezry kind o' tuk pity on the feller; and havin' house-room to spare, and railly in need of a good hand at the mill, he said all right; and so the feller stopped and the wagon druv ahead and left 'em; and they didn't have no things ner nothin'—not even a cyarpet-satchel, ner a stitch o' clothes, on'y what they had on their backs. And I think it was the third er fourth day after Bills stopped 'at he whirped Tomps Burk, the bully o' here them days, tel you wouldn't 'a' knowed him!

Well, I'd heerd o' this, and the facts is I'd made up my mind 'at Bills was a bad stick, and the place wasn't none the better fer his bein' here. But, as I was a-goin' on to say,—as Steve and me driv up to the mill, I ketched sight o' Bills the first thing, a-lookin' out o' where some boards was knocked off, jest over the worter-wheel; and he knowed Steve—I could see that by his face; and he hollered somepin', too, but what it was I couldn't jest make out, fer the noise o' the wheel; but he looked to me as ef he'd hollered somepin' mean a-purpose so's Steve *wouldn't* hear it, and *he'd* have the consolation o' knowin' 'at he'd called Steve some ornry name 'thout givin' him a *chance* to take it up. Steve was allus quiet-like, but ef you raised his dander onc't—and you could do that 'thout much trouble, callin' him names er somepin', particular'

anything 'bout his mother. Steve loved his mother—allus loved his mother, and would fight fer her at the drap o' the hat. And he was her favo-*rite*—allus a-talkin' o' "her boy, Steven," as she used to call him, and so proud of him, and so keerful of him allus, when he'd be sick or anything; nuss him like a baby, she would.

So when Bills hollered, Steve didn't pay no attention; and *I* said nothin', o' course, and didn't let on like I noticed him. So we druv round to the south side and hitched and Steve 'lowed he'd better feed; so I left him with the hosses and went into the mill.

They was jest a-stoppin' fer dinner. Most of 'em brought their dinners—lived so fur away, you know. The two Smith boys lived on what used to be the old Warrick farm, five er six mil'd, anyhow, from where the mill stood. Great stout fellers, they was; and little Jake, the father of 'em, wasn't no man at all—not much bigger'n you, I rickon. Le' me see, now:—There was Tomps Burk, Wade Elwood, and Joe and Ben Carter; and Wesley Morris, John Coke—wiry little cuss, he was, afore he got his leg sawed off;—and Ezry, and—Well, I don't jest mind *all* the boys—'s a long time ago, and I never was much of a hand fer names.—Now, some folks'll hear a name and never fergit it, but I can't boast of a good rickollection, 'specially o' names; and fer the last thirty year my mem'ry's be'n a-failin' me, ever sence a spell o' fever 'at I brought on onc't—fever and rheumatiz together:—You see, I went a-sainin'

with a passel o' the boys, fool-like, and let my clothes freeze on me a-comin' home. W'y, my breeches was like stove-pipes when I pulled 'em off. 'Ll, ef I didn't pay fer *that* spree! Rheumatiz got a holt o' me and helt me there flat o' my back fer eight weeks, and couldn't move hand er foot 'thout a-hollerin' like a' Injun.

And I'd 'a' be'n there yit, I rickon, ef it hadn't 'a' be'n fer a' old hoss-doctor, name o' Jones; and he gits a lot o' sod and steeps it in hot whisky and pops it on me,—and I'll-be-switched-to-death ef it didn't cuore me up, fer all I laughed and told him I'd better take the whisky in'ardly and let him keep the grass fer his doctor bill. But that's nuther here ner there! —As I was a-sayin' 'bout the mill: As I went in, the boys had stopped work and was a-gittin' down their dinners, and Bills amongst 'em, and old Ezry a chattin' away—great hand, he was, fer his joke, and allus a-cuttin' up and a-gittin' off his odd-come-shorts on the boys. And that day he was in particular good humor. He'd brought some liquor down fer the boys, and he'd be'n drinkin' a little hisse'f, enough to feel it. He didn't drink much—that is to say, he didn't git drunk adzactly; but he tuk his dram, you understand. You see, they made their own whisky in them days, and it wasn't nothin' like the bilin' stuff you git now. Old Ezry had a little still, and allus made his own whisky, enough fer fambly use, and jest as puore as worter, and as harmless. But nowadays the liquor you git's rank pizen. They say they putt tobacker in it, and strychnine, and the

Lord knows what; ner I never knowed why, 'less it was to give it a richer-lookin' flavor, like. Well, Ezry he'd brought up a jug, and the boys had be'n a-takin' it purty free; I seed that as quick as I went in.

And old Ezry called out to *me* to come and take some, the first thing. Told him I didn't b'lieve I keered about it; but nothin' would do but I must take a drink with the boys; and I was tired anyhow and I thought a little wouldn't hurt; so I takes a swig; and as I set the jug down *Bills* spoke up and says, "You're a stranger to me, and I'm a stranger to you, but I rickon we can drink to our better acquaintance,"—er somepin' to that amount, and poured out another snifter in a gourd he'd be'n a-drinkin' coffee in, and handed it to me. Well, I couldn't well refuse, of course; so I says "Here's to us," and drunk her down—mighty nigh a half pint, I rickon. Now, I railly didn't want it, but, as I tell you, I was obleeged to take it, and I downed her at a swaller and never batted an eye, fer, to tell the fact about it, I liked the taste o' liquor; and I do *yit*, on'y I know when I' got enough. Jest then I didn't want to drink on account o' Steve. Steve couldn't abide liquor in no shape ner form—fer medicine ner nothin', and I've allus thought it was his mother's doin's.

Now, a few months afore this I'd be'n to Vincennes, and I was jest a-tellin' Ezry what they was a-astin' fer their liquor there—fer I'd fetched a couple o' gallon home with me 'at I'd paid six bits

fer, and pore liquor at that: And I was a-tellin' about it, and old Ezry was a-sayin' what an oudacious figger that was, and how he could make money a-sellin' it fer half that price, and was a-goin' on a-braggin' about his liquor—and it was a good article—fer new whisky,—and jest then Steve comes in, jest as Bills was a-sayin' 'at a man 'at wouldn't drink *that* whisky wasn't no man at all! So, of course, when they ast *Steve* to take some and he told 'em no, 'at he was much obleeged, Bills was kind o' tuk down, you understand, and had to say somepin'; and says he, "I reckon you ain't no better'n the rest of us, and *we've* be'n a-drinkin' of it." But Steve didn't let on like he noticed Bills at all, and retch and shuk hands with the other boys and ast how they was all a-comin' on.

I seed Bills was riled, and more'n likely wanted trouble; and shore enough, he went on to say, kind o' snarlin'-like, 'at "he'd knowed o' men in his day 'at had be'n licked fer refusin' to drink when their betters ast 'em"; and said furder at "a lickin' wasn't none too good fer anybody 'at would refuse liquor like that o' Ezry's, and in his own house too"—er *buildin'*, ruther. Ezry shuk his head at him, but I seed 'at Bills was bound fer a quarrel, and I winks at Steve, as much as to say, "Don't you let him bully you; you'll find your brother here to see you have fair play!" *I* was a-feelin' my oats some about then, and Steve seed I was, and looked so sorry-like, and like his mother, 'at I jest thought, "I *kin* fight fer *you,* and *die* fer you, 'cause you're wuth

it!"—And I didn't someway feel like it would amount to much ef I *did* die er git killed er somepin' on *his* account. I seed Steve was mighty white around the mouth, and his eyes was a-glitterin' like a snake's; yit Bills didn't seem to take warnin', but went on to say 'at "he'd knowed boys 'at loved their mothers so well they couldn't drink nothin' stronger'n milk."

And then you'd ort o' seed Steve's coat fly off, jest like it wanted to git out of his way and give the boy room accordin' to his stren'th. I seed Bills grab a piece o' scantlin' jest in time to ketch his arm as he struck at Steve,—fer Steve was a-comin' fer him danger's. But they'd ketched Steve from behind jest then; and Bills turned fer me. I seed him draw back, and I seed Steve a-scufflin' to ketch his arm; but he didn't reach it quite in time to do me no good. It must 'a' come awful suddent. The first I rickollect was a roarin' and a buzzin' in my ears, and when I kind o' come a little better to, and crawled up and peeked over the sawlog I was a-layin' the other side of, I seed a couple clinched and a-rollin' over and over and a-makin' the chips and sawdust fly, now I *tell* you! Bills and Steve it was—head and tail, tooth and toe-nail, and a-bleedin' like good fellers! I seed a gash o' some kind in Bills's head, and Steve was purty well tuckered and a-pantin' like a lizard; and I made a rush in, and one o' the Carter boys grabbed me and told me to jest keep cool—'at *Steve* didn't need no he'p, and they might need me to keep Bills's friends

off ef *they* made a rush. By this time Steve had whirlt Bills, and was a-jest a-gittin' in a fair way to finish him up in good style, when Wesley Morris run in—I seed him do it—run in, and afore we could ketch him he struck Steve a deadener in the butt o' the ear and knocked him as limber as a rag. And then Bills whirlt Steve and got him by the th'oat, and Ben Carter and me and old Ezry closed in.—Carter tackled Morris, and Ezry and me grabs Bills—and as old Ezry grabbed him to pull him off, Bills kind o' give him a side swipe o' some kind and knocked him—I don't know *how* fur! And jest then Carter and Morris come a-scufflin' back'ards right amongst us, and Carter th'owed him right acrost Bills and Steve.

Well, it ain't fair, and I don't like to tell it, but I seed it was the last chance and I tuk advantage if it:—As Wesley and Ben fell it pulled Bills down in a kind o' twist, don't you understand, so's he couldn't he'p hisse'f, yit still a-clinchin' Steve by the th'oat, and him black in the face.—Well, as they fell I grabbed up a little hick'ry limb, not bigger'n my two thumbs, and I struck Bills a little tap kind o' over the back of his head like, and, blame me! ef he didn't keel over like a stuck pig—and not any too soon, nuther,—fer he had Steve's chunk as nigh putt out as you ever seed a man's, to come to ag'in. But he was up th'reckly and ready to 'a' went at it ef Bills could 'a' come to the scratch but Mister Bills he wasn't in no fix to try it over! After a-waitin' a while fer him to come to, and him not

a-comin' to, we concluded 'at we'd better he'p him, maybe. And we worked with him, and warshed him, and drenched him with whisky, but it 'peared like it wasn't no use.—He jest laid there with his eyes about half shet, and a-breathin' like a hoss when he's bad sceart; and I'll be dad-limbed ef I don't believe he'd 'a' *died* on our hands ef it hadn't a-happened old Doc Zions come a-ridin' past on his way home from the Murdock neighberhood, where they was a-havin' sich a time with the milk-sick. And he examined Bills, and had him laid on a plank and carried down to the house—'bout a mil'd, I reckon, from the mill. Looked kind o' cur'ous to see Steve a-he'ppin' pack the feller, after his nearly chokin' him to death. Oh, it was a bloody fight, I tell you! W'y, they wasn't a man in the mill 'at didn't have a black eye er somepin'; and old Ezry, where Bills hit him, had his nose broke, and was as bloody as a butcher. And you'd ort 'a' seed the women-folks when our p'session come a-bringin' Bills in. I never seed anybody take on like Bills's woman.—It was distressin'; it was, indeed.—Went into hysterics, she did; and we thought fer a while she'd gone plum crazy, fer she cried so pitiful over him, and called him "Charley! Charley!" stid of his right name, and went on, clean out of her head, tel she finally jest fainted clean away.

Fer three weeks Bills laid betwixt life and death, and that woman set by him night and day, and tended him as patient as a' angel—and she *was* a' angel, too; and he'd 'a' never lived to bother nobody

ag'in ef it hadn't 'a' be'n fer Annie, as he called her. Zions said there was a 'brazure of the—some kind o' p'tuber'nce, and ef he'd 'a' be'n struck jest a quarter of a' inch below—jist a quarter of a' inch—he'd 'a' be'n a dead man. And I've sence wished—not 'at I want the life of a human bein' to account fer—on'y,—well, no odds—I've sence wished 'at I *had* 'a' hit him jest a quarter of a' inch below!

Well, of course, them days they wasn't no law o' no account, and nothin' was ever done about it. So Steve and me got our grindin', and talked the matter over with Ezry and the boys. Ezry said he was a-goin' to do all he could fer Bills, 'cause he was a good hand, and when he wasn't drinkin' they wasn't no peaceabler man in the Settlement. I kind o' suspicioned what was up, but I said nothin' then. And Ezry said furder, as we was about drivin' off, that Bills was a despert feller, and it was best to kind o' humor him a little. "And you must kind o' be on your guard," he says, "and I'll watch him, and ef anything happens 'at I git wind of I'll let you know," he says; and so we putt out fer home.

Mother tuk on awful about it. You see, she thought she'd be'n the whole blame of it, 'cause the Sund'y afore that her and Steve had went to meetin', and they got there late, and the house was crowded, and Steve had ast Bills to give up his seat to mother, and he wouldn't do it, and said somepin' at disturbed the prayin', and the preacher prayed 'at the feller 'at was a-makin' the disturbance might be forgive'; and that riled Bills so he got up and left,

and hung around till it broke up, so's he could git a chance at Steve to pick a fight. And he did *try* it, and dared Steve and double-dared him fer a fight, but mother begged so hard 'at she kep' him out of it. Steve said 'at he'd 'a' told me all about it on the way to Ezry's, on'y he'd promised mother you know, not to say nothin' to me.

Ezry was over at our house about six weeks after the fight, apparently as happy as you please. We ast him how him and Bills was a-makin' it, and he said first-rate; said 'at Bills was jest a-doing splendid; said he'd got moved in his new house 'at he'd fixed up fer him, and ever'thing was a-goin' on as smooth as could be; and Bills and the boys was on better terms'n ever; and says he, "As fur as you and Steve's concerned, Bills don't 'pear to bear you no ill feelin's, and says as fur as he's concerned the thing's settled." "Well," says I, "Ezry, I hope so; but I can't he'p but think they's somepin' at the bottom of all this"; and says I, "I don't think it's in Bills to ever amount to anything good"; and says I, "It's my opinion they's a dog in the well, and now you mark it!"

Well, he said he *wasn't* jest easy, but maybe he'd come out all right; said he couldn't turn the feller off—he hadn't the heart to do that, with that-air pore, dilicate woman o' his, and the baby. And then he went on to tell what a smart sort o' woman Bills' wife was,—one of the nicest little women he'd ever laid eyes on, said she was; said she was the kindest

thing, and the sweetest-tempered, and all—and the handiest woman 'bout the house, and 'bout sewin', and cookin', and the like, and all kinds o' housework; and so good to the childern, and all; and how they all got along so well; and how proud she was of her baby, and allus a-goin' on about it and a-cryin' over it and a-carryin' on, and wouldn't leave it out of her sight a minute. And Ezry said 'at she could write so purty, and made sich purty pictur's fer the childern; and how they all liked her better'n their own mother. And, sence she'd moved, he said it seemed so lonesome-like 'thout *her* about the house—like they'd lost one o' their own fambly; said they didn't git to see her much now, on'y sometimes, when her man would be at work, she'd run over fer a while, and kiss all the childern and women-folks about the place,—the greatest hand fer the childern, she was; tell 'em all sorts o' little stories, you know, and sing fer 'em; said 'at she could sing so sweet-like, 'at time and time ag'in she'd break clean down in some song o' nother, and her voice would trimble so mournful-like 'at you'd find yourse'f a-cryin' afore you knowed it. And she used to coax Ezry's woman to let her take the childern home with her; and they used to allus want to go, tel Bills come onc't while they was there, and they said he got to jawin' her fer a-makin' some to-do over the baby, and swore at her and tuk it away from her and whirped it fer cryin', and *she* cried and told him to whirp her and not little Annie, and he said that was jest what he *was* a-doin'. And

the childern was allus afeard to go there any more after that—'feard he'd come home and whirp little Annie ag'in. Ezry said he jest done that to skeer 'em away—'cause he didn't want a passel o' childern a-whoopin' and a-howlin' and a-trackin' round the house all the time.

But, shore enough, Bills, after the fight, 'peared like he'd settled down, and went 'bout his business so stiddy-like, and worked so well, the neighbers begin to think he was all right after all, and railly *some* got to *likin' him.* But fer *me,*—well, I was a leetle slow to argy 'at the feller wasn't "a-possumin'." But the next time I went over to the mill—and Steve went with me—old Ezry come and met us, and said 'at Bills didn't have no hard feelin's ef *we* didn't, and 'at he wanted us to fergive him; said 'at Bills wanted him to tell us 'at he was sorry the way he'd acted, and wanted us to fergive him. Well, I looked at Ezry, and we both looked at him, jest perfectly tuk back—the idee o' Bills a-wantin' anybody to *fergive him!* And says I, "Ezry, what in the name o' common sense do you mean?" And says he, "I mean jest what I say; Bills jined meetin' last night and had 'em all a-prayin' fer him; and we all had *a glorious time,*" says old Ezry; "and his woman was there and jined, too, and prayed and shouted and tuk on to beat all; and Bills got up and spoke and give in his experience, and said he'd be'n a bad man, but, glory to God, them times was past and gone; said 'at he wanted all of 'em to pray fer him, and he wanted to prove faithful, and wanted

all his inemies to fergive him; and prayed 'at you and Steve and your folks would fergive him, and ever'body 'at he ever wronged anyway." And old Ezry was a-goin' on, and his eyes a-sparklin', and a-rubbin' his hands, he was so excited and tickled over it, 'at Steve and me we jest stood there a-gawkin' like, tel Bills hisse'f come up and retch out one hand to Steve and one to me; and Steve shuk with him kind o' oneasy-like, and I—well, sir, I never felt cur'oser in my born days than I did that minute.

The cold chills crep' over me, and I shuk as ef I had the agur, and I folded my hands behind me and I looked that feller square in the eye, and I tried to speak three or four times afore I could make it, and when I did, my voice wasn't natchurl—sounded like a feller a-whisperin' through a tin horn er somepin'.—And I says, says I, "You're a liar," slow and delibert. That was all. His eyes blazed a minute, and drapped; and he turned, 'thout a word, and walked off. And Ezry says, "He's in airnest; I know he's in airnest, er he'd 'a' never 'a' tuk that!" And so he went on, tel finally Steve jined in, and betwixt 'em they p'suaded me 'at I was in the wrong and the best thing to do was to make it all up, which I finally did. And Bills said 'at he'd 'a' never 'a' felt jest right 'thout *my* friendship, fer he'd wronged me, he said, and he'd wronged Steve and mother, too, and he wanted a chance, he said, o' makin' things straight ag'in.

Well, a-goin' home, I don't think Steve and me talked o' nothin' else but Bills—how airnest the fel-

ler acted 'bout it, and how, ef he *wasn't* in airnest, he'd 'a' never 'a' swallered that "lie," you see. That's what walked my log, fer he could 'a' jest as easy 'a' knocked me higher'n Kilgore's kite as he could to walk away 'thout a-doin' of it.

Mother was awful tickled when she heerd about it, fer she'd had an idee 'at we'd have trouble afore we got back, and a-gittin' home safe, and a-bringin' the news 'bout Bills a-jinin' church and all, tickled her so 'at she mighty nigh shouted fer joy. You see, mother was a' old church-member all her life; and I don't think she ever missed a sermont er a prayer-meetin' 'at she could possibly git to—rain er shine, wet er dry. When they was a meetin' of any kind a-goin' on, go she would, and nothin' short o' sickness in the fambly, er knowin' nothin' of it, would stop *her!* And clean up to her dyin' day she was a God-fearin' and consistent Christian ef they ever was one. I mind now when she was tuk with her last spell and laid bedfast fer eighteen months, she used to tell the preacher, when he'd come to see her and pray and go on, 'at she could die happy ef she could on'y be with 'em all ag'in in their love-feasts and revivals. She was purty low then, and had be'n a-failin' fast fer a day er two; and that day they'd be'n a-holdin' service at the house. It was her request, you know, and the neighbers had congergated and was a-prayin' and a-singin' her favorite hymns —one in p'tickler, "God moves in a myster'ous way his wunders to p'form," and 'bout his "Walkin' on the sea and a-ridin' of the storm."

Well, anyway, they'd be'n a-singin' that hymn fer her—she used to sing that'n so much, I rickollect as fur back as I kin remember; and I mind how it used to make me feel so lonesome-like and solemn, don't you know,—when I'd be a-knockin' round the place along o' evenings, and she'd be a-milkin', and I'd hear her, at my feedin', way off by myse'f, and it allus somehow made me feel like a feller'd ort 'o try and live as nigh right as the law allows, and that's about my doctern yit. Well, as I was a-goin' on to say, they'd jest finished that old hymn, and Granny Lowry was jest a-goin' to lead in prayer, when I noticed mother kind o' tried to turn herse'f in bed, and smiled so weak and faint-like, and looked at me, with her lips a-kind o' movin'; and I thought maybe she wanted another dos't of her sirup 'at Ezry's woman had fixed up fer her, and I kind o' stooped down over her and ast her ef she wanted anything.

"Yes," she says, and nodded, and her voice sounded so low and solemn and so fur-away-like 'at I knowed she'd never take no more medicine on this airth. And I tried to ast her what it was she wanted, but I couldn't say nothin'; my throat hurt me, and I felt the warm tears a-boolgin' up, and her kind old face a-glimmerin' away so pale-like afore my eyes, and still a-smilin' up so lovin' and forgivin' and so good 'at it made me think so fur back in the past I seemed to be a little boy ag'in; and seemed like her thin gray hair was brown and a-shinin' in the sun as it used to do when

she helt me on her shoulder in the open door, when father was a-livin' and we used to go to meet him at the bars; seemed like her face was young ag'in, and a-smilin' like it allus used to be, and her eyes as full o' hope and happiness as afore they ever looked on grief er ever shed a tear. And I thought of all the trouble they had saw on my account, and of all the lovin' words her lips had said, and of all the thousand things her pore old hands had done fer me 'at I never even thanked her fer; and how I loved her better'n all the world besides, and would be so lonesome ef she went away.—Lord! I can't tell you what I *didn't* think and feel and see. And I knelt down by her, and she whispered then fer Steven, and he come, and we kissed her—and she died—a-smilin' like a child—jest like a child.

Well—well! 'Pears like I'm allus a-runnin' into somepin' else. I wisht I *could* tell a story 'thout driftin' off in matters 'at hain't no livin' thing to do with what I started out with. I try to keep from thinkin' of afflictions and the like, 'cause sich is bound to come to the best of us; but feller's rickollection will bring 'em up, and I reckon it'd ort'o be er it wouldn't be; and I've thought, sometimes, it was done maybe to kind o' admonish a feller, as the Good Book says, of how good a world'd be 'thout no sorrow in it.

Where was I? Oh, yes, I rickollect;—about Bills a-jinin' church. Well, sir, they wasn't a better-actin' feller and more religious-like in all the neighberhood. Spoke in meetin's, he did, and tuk a' ac-

tive part in all religious doin's, and, in fact, was jest as square a man, appearantly, as the preacher hisse'f. And about six er eight weeks after he'd jined, they got up another revival, and things run high. They was a big excitement, and ever'body was a'tendin' from fur and near. Bills and Ezry got the mill-hands to go, and didn't talk o' nothin' *but* religion. People thought a while 'at old Ezry'd turn preacher he got so interested 'bout church matters. He was easy excited 'bout anything; and when he went into a thing it was in dead airnest, shore!—"jest flew off the handle," as I heerd a comical feller git off onc't. And him and Bills was up and at it ever' night—prayin' and shoutin' at the top o' their voice. Them railly did seem like good times—when ever'-body jined together, and prayed and shouted "Ho-sanner," and danced around together, and hugged each other like they was so full o' glory they jest couldn't he'p theirse'v's!—That's the reason *I* jined; it looked so kind o' whole-souled-like and good, you understand. But law! I didn't hold out—on'y fer a little while, and no wunder!

Well, about them times Bills was tuk down with the agur; first got to chillin' ever'-other-day, then *ever'* day, and harder and harder, tel sometimes he'd be obleeged to stay away from meetin' on account of it. And onc't I was at meetin' when he told about it, and how when he couldn't be with 'em he allus prayed at home, and he said 'at he believed his prayers was answered, fer onc't he'd prayed fer a new outpourin' of the Holy Sperit, and that very

night they was three new jiners. And another time he said 'at he'd prayed 'at Wesley Morris would jine, and lo and behold you! he *did* jine, and the very night 'at he *prayed* he would.

Well, the night I'm a-speakin' of he'd had a chill the day afore and couldn't go that night, and was in bed when Ezry druv past fer him; said he'd like to go, but had a high fever and couldn't. And then Ezry's woman ast him ef he was too sick to spare Annie; and he said no, they could take her and the baby: and told her to fix his medicine so's he could reach it 'thout gittin' out o' bed, and he'd git along 'thout her. And so she tuk the baby and went along with Ezry and his folks.

I was at meetin' that night and rickollect 'em comin' in. Annie got a seat jest behind me—Steve give her his'n and stood up; and I rickollect a-astin' her how Bills was a-gittin' along with the agur; and little Annie, the baby, kep' a-pullin' my hair and a-crowin' tel finally she went to sleep; and Steve ast her mother to let *him* hold her—cutest little thing you ever laid eyes on, and the very pictur' *of* her mother.

Old Daddy Barker preached that night, and a mighty good sermont. His text, ef I rickollect right, was "workin' out your own salvation"; and when I listen to preachers nowadays in their big churches and their fine pulpits, I allus think o' Daddy Barker, and kind o' some way wisht the old times could come ag'in, with the old log meetin'-house with its puncheon-floor, and the chinkin' in the walls, and old

Daddy Barker in the pulpit. He'd make you feel 'at the Lord could make Hisse'f at home there, and find jest as abundant comfort in the old log house as He could in any of your fine-furnished churches 'at you can't set down in 'thout payin' fer the privilege, like it was a theater.

Ezry had his two little girls jine that night, and I rickollect the preacher made sich a purty prayer about the Savior a-cotin' from the Bible 'bout "Suffer little childern to come unto Me"—and all; and talked so purty 'bout the jedgment day, and mothers a-meetin' their little ones there—and all; and went on tel they wasn't a dry eye in the house—And jest as he was a-windin' up, Abe Riggers stuck his head in at the door and hollered "Fire!" loud as he could yell. We all rushed out, a-thinkin' it was the meetin'-house; but he hollered it was the mill; and shore enough, away off to the south'ards we could see the light acrost the woods, and see the blaze a-lickin' up above the trees. I seed old Ezry as he come a-scufflin' through the crowd; and we putt out together fer it. Well, it was two mil'd to the mill, but by the time we'd half-way got there, we could tell it wasn't the mill a-burnin', 'at the fire was furder to the left, and that was Ezry's house; and by the time we got there it wasn't much use. We pitched into the household goods, and got out the beddin', and the furnitur' and cheers, and the like o' that; saved the clock and a bedstid, and got the bureau purt' nigh out when they hollered to us 'at the roof was a-cavin' in, and we had to leave it;

well, we'd tuk the drawers out, all but the big one, and that was locked; and it and all in it went with the buildin'; and that was a big loss: All the money 'at Ezry was a-layin' by was in that-air drawer, and a lot o' keepsakes and trinkets 'at Ezry's woman said she wouldn't 'a' parted with fer the world and all.

I never seed a troubleder fambly than they was. It jest 'peared like old Ezry give clean down, and the women and childern a-cryin' and a-takin' on. It looked jest awful—shore's you're born!—Losin' ever'thing they'd worked so hard fer—and there it was, purt' nigh midnight, and a fambly, jest a little while ago all so happy, and now with no home to go to, ner nothin'!

It was arranged fer Ezry's to move in with Bills—that was about the on'y chance—on'y one room and a loft; but Bills said they could manage *some* way, fer a while anyhow.

Bills said he seed the fire when it first started, and could a-putt it out ef he'd on'y be'n strong enough to git there; said he started twic't to go, but was too weak and had to go back to bed ag'in; said it was a-blazin' in the kitchen roof when he first seed it. So the gineral conclusion 'at we all come to was—it must a-ketched from the flue.

It was too late in the fall then to think o' buildin' even the ornriest kind of shanty, and so Ezry moved in with Bills. And Bills used to say ef it hadn't 'a' be'n fer Ezry *he'd* 'a' never 'a' had no

house, ner nothin' to putt in it, nuther! You see, all the household goods 'at Bills had in the world he'd got of Ezry, and he 'lowed he'd be a triflin' whelp ef he didn't do all in *his* power to make *Ezry* perfeckly at home's long as he wanted to stay there. And together they managed to make room fer 'em all, by a-buildin' a kind o' shed-like to the main house, intendin' to build when spring come. And ever'-thing went along first-rate, I guess; never heerd no complaints—that is, p'tickler.

Ezry was kind o' down fer a long time, though; didn't like to talk about his trouble much, and didn't 'tend meetin' much, like he used to; said it made him think 'bout his house burnin', and he didn't feel safe to lose sight o' the mill. And the meetin's kind o' broke up altogether that winter. Almost broke up religious doin's, it did. 'S long as I've lived here I never seed jest sich a slack in religion as they was that winter; and 'fore *then,* I kin mind the time when they wasn't a night the whole en-durin' winter when they didn't have preachin' er prayer-meetin' o' some kind a-goin' on. W'y, I rick-ollect one night in p'tickler—the *coldest* night, *whooh!* And somebody had stold the meetin'-house door, and they was obleeged to preach 'thout it. And the wind blowed in so they had to hold their hats afore the candles, and then onc't-in-a-while they'd git sluffed out. And the snow drifted in so it was jest like settin' outdoors; and they had to stand up when they prayed—yes-sir! stood up to pray. I noticed that night they was a' oncommon lot o' jin-

ers, and I believe to this day 'at most of 'em jined jest to git up where the stove was. Lots o' folks had their feet froze right in meetin'; and Steve come home with his ears froze like they was whittled out o' bone; and he said 'at Mary Madaline Wells's feet was froze, and she had two pair o' socks on over her shoes. Oh, it *was* cold, now I *tell* you!

They run the mill part o' that winter—part they couldn't. And they didn't work to say stiddy tel along in Aprile, and then they was snow on the ground yit—in the shadders—and the ground froze, so you couldn't hardly dig a grave. But at last they got to kind o' jiggin' along ag'in. Plenty to do there was; and old Ezry was mighty tickled, too; 'peared to recruit right up like. Ezry was allus best tickled when things was a-stirrin', and then he was a-gittin' ready fer buildin', you know,—wanted a house of his own, he said.—And of course it wasn't adzactly like home, all cluttered up as they was there at Bills's.

They got along mighty well, though, together; and the women-folks and childern got along the best in the world. Ezry's woman used to say she never laid eyes on jest sich another woman as Annie was. Said it was jest as good as a winter's schoolin' fer the childern; said her two little girls had learnt to read, and didn't know their a-b abs afore Annie learnt 'em; well, the oldest one, Mary Patience, she *did* know her *letters,* I guess—fourteen year old, she was; but Mandy, the youngest, had never seed inside a book afore that winter; and

the way she learnt was jest su'prisin'. She was puny-like and frail-lookin' allus, but ever'body 'lowed she was a heap smarter'n Mary Patience, and she *was;* and in my opinion she railly had more sense'n all the rest o' the childern putt together, 'bout books and cipherin' and 'rethmetic, and the like; and John Wesley, the oldest of 'em, he got to teachin' at last, when he growed up,—but, law! he couldn't write his own name so's you could read it. I allus thought they was a good 'eal of old Ezry in John Wesley. Liked to romance 'round with the youngsters 'most too well.—Spiled him fer teachin', I allus thought; fer instance, ef a scholard said somepin' funny in school, John-Wes he'd jest have to have his laugh out with the rest, and it was jest fun fer the boys, you know, to go to school to *him.* Allus in fer spellin'-matches and the like, and learnin' songs and sich. I rickollect he give a' exhibition onc't, one winter, and I'll never fergit it, I rickon.

The schoolhouse would on'y hold 'bout forty, comf'table, and that night they was up'ards of a hunderd er more—jest crammed and jammed! And the benches was piled back so's to make room fer the platform they'd built to make their speeches and dialogues on; and fellers a-settin' up on them back seats, their heads was clean against the j'ist. It was a low ceilin', anyhow, and o' course them 'at tuk a part in the doin's was way up, too. Janey Thompson had to give up her part in a dialogue, 'cause she looked so tall she was afeard the congergation would laugh at her; and they couldn't git her to

come out and sing in the openin' song 'thout lettin' her set down first and git ready 'fore they pulled the curtain. You see, they had sheets sewed together, and fixed on a string some way, to slide back'ards and for'ards, don't you know. But they was a big bother to 'em—couldn't git 'em to work like. Ever' time they'd git 'em slid 'bout half-way acrost somepin' would ketch, and they'd haf to stop and fool with 'em a while 'fore they could git 'em the balance o' the way acrost. Well, finally, to'rds the last, they jest kep' 'em drawed back all the time.

It was a pore affair, and spiled purt' nigh ever' piece; but the scholards all wanted it fixed thataway, the teacher said, in a few appropert remarks he made when the thing was over. Well, I was a-settin' in the back part o' the house on them high benches, and my head was jest even with them on the platform, and the lights was pore, and where the string was stretched fer the curtain to slide on it looked like the p'formers was strung on it. And when Lige Boyer's boy was a-speakin'—kind o' mumbled it, you know, and you couldn't half hear —it looked fer the world like he was a-chawin' that-air string; and some devilish feller 'lowed ef he'd chaw it clean in two it'd be a good thing fer the balance. After that they all sung a sleigh-ridin' song, and it was right purty, the way they got it off. Had a passel o' sleigh-bells they'd ring ever' onc't-in-a-while, and it sounded purty—shore!

Then Hunicut's girl, Marindy, read a letter 'bout

winter, and what fun the youngsters allus had in winter-time, a-sleighin' and the like, and spellin'-matches, and huskin'-bees, and all. Purty good, it was, and made a feller think o' old times. Well, that was about the best thing they was done that night; but ever'body said the teacher wrote it fer her; and I wouldn't be su'prised much, fer they was married not long afterwards. I expect he wrote it fer her.—Wouldn't putt it past Wes!

Then had a dialogue, too, 'at was purty good. Little Bob Arnold was all fixed up—had on his pap's old bell-crowned hat, the one he was married in. Well, I jest thought die I would when I seed that old hat and called to mind the night his pap was married, and we all got him a little how-come-you-so on some left-handed cider 'at had be'n a-layin' in a whisky-bar'l tel it was strong enough to bear up a' egg. I kin rickollect now jest how he looked in that hat, when it was all new, you know, and a-settin' on the back o' his head, and his hair in his eyes; and sich hair!—as red as git-out—and his little black eyes a-shinin' like beads. Well-sir, you'd 'a' died to 'a' seed him a-dancin'. We danced all night that night, and would 'a' be'n a-dancin' yit, I rickon, ef the fiddler hadn't 'a' give out. Wash Lowry was a-fiddlin' fer us; and along to'rds three er four in the morning Wash was purty well fagged out. You see, Wash could never play fer a dance er nothin' 'thout a-drinkin' more er less, and when he got to a certain pitch you couldn't git nothin' out o' him but

"Barbary Allen"; so at last he struck up on that, and jest kep' it up and *kep'* it up, and nobody couldn't git nothin' else out of him!

Now, anybody 'at ever danced knows 'at "Barbary Allen" hain't no tune to dance by, *no* way you can fix it; and, o' course, the boys seed at onc't their fun was gone ef they couldn't git him on another tune.—And they'd coax and beg and plead with him, and maybe git him started on "The Wind Blows over the Barley," and 'bout the time they'd git to knockin' it down ag'in purty lively, he'd go to sawin' away on "Barbary Allen"—and I'll-be-switched-to-death ef that feller didn't set there and play hisse'f sound asleep on "Barbary Allen," and we had to wake him up afore he'd quit! Now, that's jest the plum facts.

And they wasn't a better fiddler nowheres than Wash Lowry, when he was at hisse'f. I've heerd a good many fiddlers in my day, and I never heerd one yit 'at could play my style o' fiddlin' ekal to Wash Lowry. You see, Wash didn't play none o' this-here newfangled music—nothin' but the old tunes, you understand, "The Forkèd Deer," and "Old Fat Gal," and "Gray Eagle," and the like. Now, them's music! Used to like to hear Wash play "Gray Eagle." He could come as nigh a-makin' that old tune talk as you ever heerd! Used to think a heap o' his fiddle—and he had a good one, shore. I've heerd him say, time and time ag'in, 'at a five-dollar gold-piece wouldn't buy it, and I knowed him myse'f to refuse a calf fer it onc't—yes-sir, a year-land calf—and the feller offered him a double-bar'l'd

pistol to boot, and blame ef he'd take it; said he'd ruther part with anything else he owned than his fiddle.—But here I am, clean out o' the furry ag'in! . . . Oh, yes; I was a-tellin' 'bout little Bob, with that old hat; and he had on a swaller-tail coat and a lot o' fixin's, a-actin' like he was a squire; and he had him a great long beard made out o' corn-silks, and you wouldn't 'a' knowed him ef it wasn't fer his voice. Well, he was a-p'tendin' he was a squire a-tryin' some kind o' lawsuit, you see; and John Wesley he was the defendunt, and Joney Wiles, I believe it was, played like he was the plaintive. And they'd had a fallin' out 'bout some land, and was a-lawin' fer p'session, you understand. Well, Bob he made out it was a mighty bad case when *John-Wes* comes to consult him 'bout it, and tells *him* ef a little p'int o' law was left out he thought he could git the land fer him. And then John-Wes *bribes* him, you understand, to leave out the p'int o' law, and the squire says he'll do all he kin, and so John-Wes goes out a-feelin' purty good. Then *Wiles* comes in to consult the squire, don't you see. And the squire tells *him* the same tale he told *John Wesley*. So *Wiles* bribes him to leave out the p'int o' law in *his* favor, don't you know. So when the case is tried he decides in favor o' John-Wes, a-tellin' *Wiles* some cock-and-bull story 'bout havin' to manage it thataway so's to git the case mixed so's he could git it fer him shore; and posts *him* to sue fer a change of venue er somepin',—anyway, Wiles gits a new trial, and then the squire decides in *his* favor, and

tells John-Wes another trial will fix it in *his* favor, and so on.—And so it goes on tel, anyway, he gits holt o' the land hisse'f and all their money besides, and leaves them to hold the bag! Well-sir, it was purty well got up; and they said it was John-Wes's doin's, and I 'low it was—he was a good hand at anything o' that sort, and knowed how to make fun. —But I've be'n a-tellin' you purty much ever'thing but what I started out with, and I'll try and hurry through, 'cause I know you're tired.

'Long 'bout the beginnin' o' summer, things had got back to purty much the old way. The boys round was a-gittin' devilish, and o' nights 'specially they was a sight o' meanness a-goin' on. The mill-hands, most of 'em, was mixed up in it—Coke and Morris, and them 'at had jined meetin' 'long in the winter had all backslid, and was a-drinkin' and carousin' round worse'n ever.

People perdicted 'at *Bills* would backslide, but he helt on faithful, to all appearance; said he liked to see a feller when he made up his mind to do right, he liked to see him do it, and not go back on his word; and even went so fur as to tell Ezry ef they didn't putt a stop to it he'd quit the neighberhood and go some'eres else. And Bills was Ezry's head man then, and he couldn't 'a' got along 'thout him; and I b'lieve ef Bills had 'a' said the word old Ezry would 'a' turned off ever' hand he had.—He got so he jest left ever'thing to Bills. Ben Carter was turned off fer somepin', and nobody ever knowed what. Bills

and him had never got along jest right sence the fight.

Ben was with this set I was a-tellin' you 'bout, and they'd got him to drinkin' and in trouble, o' course. I'd knowed Ben well enough to know he wouldn't do nothin' ornry ef he wasn't agged on, and ef he ever was mixed up in anything o' the kind Wes Morris and John Coke was at the bottom of it, and I take notice *they* wasn't turned off when Ben was.

One night the crowd was out, and Ben amongst 'em, o' course.—Sence he'd be'n turned off he'd be'n a-drinkin',—and I never blamed him much; he was so good-hearted like and easy led off, and I allus b'lieved it wasn't his own doin's.

Well, this night they cut up awful, and ef they was one fight they was a dozend; and when all the devilment was done they *could* do, they started on a stealin' expedition, and stol'd a lot o' chickens and tuk 'em to the mill to roast 'em; and, to make a long story short, that night the mill burnt clean to the ground. And the whole pack of 'em collogued together aginst Carter to saddle it on to him; claimed 'at they left Ben there at the mill 'bout twelve o'clock—which was a fact, fer he was dead drunk and couldn't git away. Steve stumbled over him while the mill was a-burnin' and drug him out afore he knowed what was a-goin' on, and it was all plain enough to Steve 'at Ben didn't have no hand in the firin' of it. But I'll tell you he sobered up mighty suddent when he seed what was a-goin' on and

heerd the neighbers a-hollerin', and a-threatenin' and a-goin' on!—fer it seemed to be the giner'l idee 'at the buildin' was fired a-purpose. And says Ben to Steve, says he, "I expect I'll haf to say good-by to you, fer they've got me in a ticklish place! I kin see through it all now, when it's too late!" And jest then Wesley Morris hollers out, "Where's Ben Carter?" and started to'ards where me and Ben and Steve was a-standin'; and Ben says, wild-like, "Don't you two fellers ever think it was *my* doin's," and whispers "Good-by," and started off; and when we turned, Wesley Morris was a-layin' flat of his back, and we heerd Carter yell to the crowd 'at "that man"—meanin' Morris—"needed lookin' after worse than *he* did," and another minute he plunged into the river and swum acrost; and we all stood and watched him in the flickerin' light tel he clum out on t'other bank; and 'at was the last anybody ever seed o' Ben Carter!

It must 'a' be'n about three o'clock in the morning by this time, and the mill then was jest a-smolderin' to ashes—fer it was as dry as tinder and burnt like a flash—and jest as a party was a-talkin' o' organizin' and follerin' Carter, we heerd a yell 'at I'll never fergit ef I'd live tel another flood. Old Ezry, it was, as white as a corpse, and with the blood a-streamin' out of a gash in his forred, and his clothes half on, come a-rushin' into the crowd and a-hollerin' fire and murder ever' jump. "My house is a-burnin', and my folks is all a-bein' murdered whilse you're a-standin' here! And Bills done it!

Bills done it!" he hollered, as he headed the crowd and started back fer home. "Bills done it! I caught him at it; and he would 'a' murdered me in cold blood ef it hadn't 'a' be'n fer his woman. He knocked me down, and had me tied to a bed-post in the kitchen afore I come to. And his woman cut me loose and told me to run fer he'p; and says I, 'Where's Bills?' and she says, 'He's after *me* by this time.' And jest then we heerd Bills holler, and we looked, and he was a-standin' out in the clearin' in front o' the house, with little Annie in his arms; and he hollered wouldn't she like to kiss the baby good-by. And she hollered 'My God!' fer me to save little Annie, and fainted clean dead away. And I heerd the roof a-crackin', and grabbed her up and packed her out jest in time. And when I looked up, Bills hollered out ag'in, and says, 'Ezry,' he says, 'you kin begin to kind o' git an idee o' what a good feller I am! And ef you hadn't 'a' caught me you'd 'a' never 'a' knowed it, and *"Brother Williams"* wouldn't 'a' be'n called away to another app'intment like he is.' And says he, 'Now, ef you foller me I'll finish you shore!—You're safe *now,* fer I hain't got time to waste on you furder.' And jest then his woman kind o' come to her senses ag'in and hollered fer little Annie, and the child heerd her and helt out its little arms to go to her, and hollered 'Mother! Mother!' And Bills says, 'Damn yer mother! ef it hadn't 'a' be'n fer *her* I'd 'a' be'n all right. And damn you, too!' he says to me.—'This'll pay you fer that lick you struck me; and fer you a-startin' reports, when I first come, 'at

more'n likely I'd done somepin' mean over East and come out West to reform! And I wonder ef I *didn't* do somepin' mean afore I come here?' he went on; 'kill somebody er somepin'? And I wonder ef I ain't reformed enough to go back? Good-by, Annie!' he hollered; 'and you needn't fret about yer baby, I'll be the same indulgent father to it I've allus be'n!' And the baby was a-cryin' and a-reachin' out its little arms to'rds its mother, when Bills he turned and struck off in the dark to'rds the river."

This was about the tale 'at Ezry told us, as nigh as I can rickollect: and by the time he finished, I never want to see jest sich another crowd o' men as was a-swarmin' there. Ain't it awful when sich a crowd gits together? I tell you it makes my flesh creep to think about it!

As Bills had gone in the direction of the river, we wasn't long in makin' our minds up 'at he'd haf to cross it, and ef he done *that* he'd haf to use the boat 'at was down below the mill, er wade it at the ford, a mil'd er more down. So we divided in three sections, like—one to go and look after the folks at the house, and another to the boat, and another to the ford. And Steve and me and Ezry was in the crowd 'at struck fer the boat: and we made time a-gittin' there! It was awful dark, and the sky was a-cloudin' up, like a storm; but we wasn't long a-gittin' to the p'int where the boat was allus tied; but they wasn't no boat there! Steve kind o' tuk the lead, and we all talked in whispers. And Steve said

to kind o' lay low and maybe we could hear somepin'; and some feller said he thought he heerd somepin' strange-like, but the wind was kind o' raisin' and kep' up sich a moanin' through the trees along the bank 'at we couldn't make out nothin'.

"Listen!" says Steve, suddent-like, "*I* hear somepin'!" We was all still ag'in—and we all heerd a moanin' 'at was sadder'n the wind—sounded mournfuller to *me*,—'cause I knowed it in a minute, and I whispered, "Little Annie." And 'way out acrost the river we could hear the little thing a-sobbin', and we all was still's death; and we heerd a voice we knowed was Bills's say, "Damn ye! Keep still, or I'll drownd ye!" And the wind kind o' moaned ag'in, and we could hear the trees a-screetchin' together in the dark, and the leaves a-rustlin'; and when it kind o' lulled ag'in, we heerd Bills make a kind o' splash with the oars; and jest then Steve whispered fer to lay low and be ready—he was a-goin' to riconn'iter; and he tuk his coat and shoes off, and slid over the bank and down into the worter as slick as a' eel. Then ever'thing was still ag'in, 'cept the moanin' o' the child, which kep' a-gittin' louder and louder; and then a voice whispered to us, "He's a-comin' back; the crowd below has sent scouts up, and they're on t'other side. Now watch clos't, and he's our meat." We could hear Bills, by the moanin' o' the baby, a-comin' nearder and nearder, tel suddently he made a sort o' miss-lick with the oar, I reckon, and must 'a' splashed the baby, fer she set up a loud cryin'; and jest then old Ezry, who was

a-leanin' over the bank, kind o' lost his grip, some way o' nother, and fell kersplash in the worter like a' old chunk. "Hello!" says Bills, through the dark, "you're there, too, air ye?" as old Ezry splashed up the bank ag'in. And "Cuss you!" he says then, to the baby—"ef it hadn't be'n fer *your* infernal squawkin' I'd 'a' be'n all right; but you've brought the whole neighberhood out, and, damn you, I'll jest let you swim out to 'em!" And we heerd a splash, then a kind o' gurglin', and then Steve's voice a-hollerin', "Close in on him, boys; I've got the baby!"

And about a dozent of us bobbed off the bank like so many bullfrogs, and I'll tell you the worter b'iled! We could jest make out the shape o' the boat, and Bills a-standin' with a' oar drawed back to smash the first head 'at come in range. It was a mean place to git at him. We knowed he was despert, and fer a minute we kind o' helt back. Fifteen foot o' worter's a mighty onhandy place to git hit over the head in! And Bills says, "You hain't afeard, I rickon—twenty men ag'in' one!" "You'd better give yourse'f up!" hollered Ezry from the shore. "No, Brother Sturgiss," says Bills, "I can't say 'at I'm at all anxious 'bout bein' borned ag'in, jest yit a while," he says; "I see you kind o' 'pear to go in fer baptism; guess you'd better go home and git some dry clothes on; and, speakin' o' home, you'd ort 'o be there by all means—your house might catch afire and burn up whilse you're gone!" And jest then the boat give a suddent shove under him—some feller'd div under and tilted it—and fer a min-

ute it throwed him off his guard, and the boys closed in. Still he had the advantage, bein' in the boat: and as fast as a feller would climb in he'd git a whack o' the oar, tel finally they got to pilin' in a little too fast fer him to manage, and he hollered then 'at we'd have to come to the bottom ef we got him, and with that he div out o' the end o' the boat, and we lost sight of him; and I'll be blame' ef he didn't give us the slip after all!

Well sir, we watched fer him, and some o' the boys swum on down stream, expectin' he'd raise, but couldn't find hide ner hair of him; so we left the boat a-driftin' off down stream and swum ashore, a-thinkin' he'd jest drownded hisse'f a-purpose. But they was more su'prise waitin' fer us yit,—fer lo-and-behold-ye, when we got ashore they wasn't no trace o' Steve er the baby to be found. Ezry said he seed Steve when he fetched little Annie ashore, and she was all right, on'y she was purt' nigh past cryin'; he said Steve had lapped his coat around her and give her to him to take charge of, and he got so excited over the fight he laid her down betwixt a couple o' logs and kind o' fergot about her tel the whole thing was over, and he went to look fer her, and she was gone. Couldn't 'a' be'n 'at she'd 'a' wundered off her-own-se'f; and it couldn't 'a' be'n 'at *Steve*'d take her, 'thout a-lettin' us know it. It was a mighty aggervatin' conclusion to come to, but we had to do it, and that was, *Bills* must 'a' got ashore unbeknownst to us and packed her off. Sich a thing wasn't hardly probable, yit it was a thing 'at

might be; and after a-talkin' it over we had to admit 'at *that* must 'a' be'n the way of it. But where was *Steve?* W'y, we argied, he'd diskivvered she was gone, and had putt out on track of her 'thout losin' time to stop and explain the thing. The next question was, what did Bills want with her ag'in?—He'd tried to drownd her onc't. We could ast questions enough, but c'rect answers was mighty skearce, and we jest concluded 'at the best thing to do was to putt out fer the ford, fer that was the nighdest place Bills could cross 'thout a boat, and ef it *was* him tuk the child, he was still on our side o' the river, o' course. So we struck out fer the ford, a-leavin' a couple o' men to search *up* the river. A drizzlin' sort o' rain had set in by this time, and with that and the darkness and the moanin' of the wind, it made 'bout as lonesome a prospect as a feller ever wants to go through ag'in.

It was jest a-gittin' a little gray-like in the morning by the time we reached the ford, but you couldn't hardly see two rods afore you fer the mist and the fog 'at had settled along the river. We looked fer tracks, but couldn't make out nothin'. Therectly old Ezry punched me and p'inted out acrost the river. "What's that?" he whispers. Jest 'bout half-way acrost was somepin' white-like in the worter—couldn't make out what—perfectly still it was. And I whispered back and told him I guess it wasn't nothin' but a sycamore snag. "Listen!" says he; "sycamore snags don't make no noise like that!" And, shore enough, it was the same moanin'

noise we'd heerd the baby makin' when we first got on the track. Sobbin' she was, as though nigh about dead. "Well, ef that's *Bills,*" says I—"and I reckon they hain't no doubt but it is—what in the name o' all that's good and bad's the feller a-standin' there fer?" And a-creepin' clos'ter, we could make him out plainer and plainer. It *was* him; and there he stood breast-high in the worter, a-holdin' the baby on his shoulder like, and a-lookin' up stream, and a-waitin'.

"What do you make out of it?" says Ezry. "What's he waitin' fer?"

And, a-strainin' my eyes in the direction *he* was a-lookin', I seed somepin' a-movin' down the river, and a minute later I'd made out the old boat a-driftin' down stream; and then of course ever'thing was plain enough: He was waitin' fer the boat, and ef he got *that* he'd have the same advantage on us he had afore.

"Boys," says I, "he mustn't git that boat ag'in! Foller me, and don't let him git to the shore alive!" And in we plunged. He seed us, but he never budged, on'y to grab the baby by its little legs, and swing it out at arm's len'th. "Stop, there!" he hollered.—"Stop jest where ye air! Move another inch and I'll drownd this damn' young-un afore yer eyes!" he says.—And he'd 'a' done it. "Boys," says I, "he's got us. Don't move! This thing'll have to rest with a higher power'n our'n! Ef any of you kin *pray,*" says I, "now's a good time to do it!"

Jest then the boat swung up, and Bills grabbed it

and retch 'round and set the baby in it, never a-takin' his eye off us, though, fer a minute. "Now," says he, with a sort o' snarlin' laugh, "I've on'y got a little while to stay with you, and I want to say a few words afore I go. I want to tell you fellers, in the first place, 'at you've be'n *fooled* in me: I *hain't* a good feller—now, honest! And ef you're a little worse fer findin' it out so late in the day, you hain't none the worse fer losin' me so soon —fer I'm a-goin' away now, and any interference with my arrangements'll on'y give you more trouble; so it's better all around to let me go peaceable and jest while I'm in the notion. I expect it'll be a disapp'intment to some o' you that my name hain't Williams, but it hain't. And maybe you won't think nigh as much o' me when I tell you furder 'at I was obleeged to 'dopt the name o' Williams onc't to keep from bein' strung up to a lamp-post, but sich is the facts. I was so extremely unfortunit onc't as to kill a p'tickler friend o' mine, and he forgive me with his dyin' breath, and told me to run whilse I could, and be a better man. But he'd spotted me with a' ugly mark 'at made it kind o' onhandy *to* git away, but I did at last; and jest as I was a-gittin' reformed-like, you fellers had to kick in the traces, and I've made up my mind to hunt out a more moraler community, where they don't make such a fuss about trifles. And havin' nothin' more to say, on'y to send *Annie* word 'at I'll still be a father to her young-un here, I'll bid you all good-by." And with that he turned and clum in the boat

—or ruther *fell* in,—fer somepin' black-like had riz up in it, with a' awful lick—my—God!—And, a minute later, boat and baggage was a-gratin' on the shore, and a crowd came thrashin' 'crost from t'other side to jine us,—and 'peared like wasn't a *second* longer tel a feller was a-swingin' by his neck to the limb of a scrub-oak, his feet clean off the ground and his legs a-jerkin' up and down like a lumber-jack's.

And Steve it was a-layin' in the boat, and he'd rid a mil'd er more 'thout knowin' it. Bills had struck and stunt him as he clum in whilse the rumpus was a-goin' on, and he'd on'y come to in time to hear Bills's farewell address to us there at the ford.

Steve tuk charge o' little Annie ag'in, and ef she'd 'a' be'n his own child he wouldn't 'a' went on more over her than he did; and said nobody but her mother would git her out o' his hands ag'in. And he was as good as his word; and ef you could 'a' seen him a half hour after that, when he *did* give her to her mother—all lapped up in his coat and as drippin'-wet as a little drownded angel—it would 'a' made you wish't you was him to see that little woman a-caperin' round him, and a-thankin' him, and a-cryin' and a-laughin', and almost a-huggin' him, she was so tickled,—well, I thought in my soul she'd die! And Steve blushed like a girl to see her a-takin' on, and a-thankin' him, and a-cryin', and a-kissin' little Annie, and a-goin' on. And when she inquired 'bout Bills, which she did all suddent-like, with a burst o' tears, we jest didn't have the

heart to tell her—on'y we said he'd crossed the river and got away. And he had!

And now comes a part o' this thing 'at'll more'n like tax you to believe it: Williams and her wasn't man and wife—and you needn't look su'prised, nuther, and I'll tell you fer why:—They was own brother and sister; and that brings me to *her* part of the story, which you'll haf to admit beats anything 'at you ever read about in books.

Her and Williams—that *wasn't* his name, like he acknowledged, hisse'f, you rickollect—ner *she* didn't want to tell his right name; and we forgive her fer that. Her and "Williams" was own brother and sister, and their parunts lived in Ohio some'eres. Their mother had be'n dead five year' and better—grieved to death over her onnatchur'l son's recklessness, which Annie hinted had broke her father up in some way, in tryin' to shield him from the law. And the secret of her bein' with him was this: She had married a man o' the name of Curtis or Custer, I don't mind which, adzactly—but no matter; she'd married to a well-to-do young feller 'at her brother helt a' old grudge ag'in', she never knowed what; and, sence her marriage, her brother had went on from bad to worse, tel finally her father jest give him up and told him to go it his own way—he'd killed his *mother* and ruined *him,* and he'd jest give up all hopes! But Annie—you know how a sister is—she still clung to him and done ever'thing fer him, tel finally, one night, about three years after she was married, she got word

some way that he was in trouble ag'in, and sent her husband to he'p him; and a half hour after he'd gone, her brother come in, all excited and bloody, and told her to git the baby and come with him, 'at her husband had got in a quarrel with a friend o' his and was bad hurt. And she went with him, of course, and he tuk her in a buggy, and lit out with her as tight as he could go all night; and then told her 'at *he* was the feller 'at had quarreled with her husband, and the officers was after him, and he was obleeged to leave the country, and fer fear he hadn't made shore work o' him, he was a-takin' her along to make shore of his gittin' his revenge; and he swore he'd kill her and the baby too ef she dared to whimper.

And so it was, through a hunderd hardships he'd made his way at last to our section o' the country, givin' out 'at they was man and wife, and keepin' her from denyin' of it by threats, and promises of the time a-comin' when he'd send her home to her man ag'in in case he hadn't killed him. And so it run on tel you'd 'a' cried to hear her tell it, and still see her sister's love fer the feller a-breakin' out by a-declarin' how kind he was to her *at times,* and how he wasn't railly bad at heart, on'y fer his ungov'nable temper. But I couldn't he'p but notice, when she was a-tellin' of her hist'ry, what a quiet sort o' look o' satisfaction settled on the face o' Steve and the rest of 'em, don't you understand.

And now they was on'y one thing she wanted to ast, she said; and that was,—could she still make

her home with us tel she could git word to her friends?—and there she broke down ag'in, not knowin', of course, whether *they* was dead er alive; fer time and time ag'in she said somepin' told her she'd never see her husband ag'in on this airth; and then the women-folks would cry with her and console her, and the boys would speak hopeful—all but Steve; some way o' nother Steve was never like hisse'f from that time on.

And so things went fer a month and better. Ever'thing had quieted down, and Ezry and a lot o' hands, and me and Steve amongst 'em, was a-workin' on the framework of another mill. It was purty weather, and we was all in good sperits, and it 'peared like the whole neighberhood was inter*est*ed —and they *was,* too—women-folks and ever'body. And that day Ezry's woman and amongst 'em was a-gittin' up a big dinner to fetch down to us from the house; and along about noon a spruce-lookin' young feller, with a pale face and a black beard, like, come a-ridin' by and hitched his hoss, and comin' into the crowd, said "Howdy," pleasant-like, and we all stopped work as he went on to say 'at he was on the track of a feller o' the name o' "Williams," and wanted to know ef we could give him any information 'bout sich a man. Told him maybe, —'at a feller bearin' that name desappeared kind o' myster'ous from our neighberhood 'bout five weeks afore that.

"My God!" says he, a-turnin' paler'n ever, "am I too late? Where did he go, and was his sis-

ter and her baby with him?" Jest then I ketched sight o' the women-folks a-comin' with the baskets, and Annie with 'em, with a jug o' worter in her hand; so I spoke up quick to the stranger, and says I, "I guess 'his sister and her baby' wasn't along," says I, "but his *wife* and *baby's* some'eres here in the neighberhood yit." And then a-watchin' him clos't, I says, suddent, a-p'intin' over his shoulder, "There his woman is now—that one with the jug, there." Well, Annie had jest stooped to lift up one o' the little girls, when the feller turned, and their eyes met. "Annie! My wife!" he says; and Annie she kind o' give a little yelp like and came a-flutterin' down in his arms; and the jug o' worter rolled clean acrost the road, and turned a somerset and knocked the cob out of its mouth and jest laid back and hollered "Good—good—good—good—good!" like as ef it knowed what was up and was jest as glad and tickled as the rest of us.

JAMESY

ONE week ago this Christmas day, in the little back office that adjoins the counting-room of the "Daily Journal," I sat in genial conversation with two friends. I do not now recall the theme of our discussion, but the general trend of it—suggested, doubtless, by the busy scene upon the streets—I remember most distinctly savored of the mellowing influences of the coming holidays, with perhaps an acrid tang of irony as we dwelt upon the great needs of the poor at such a time, and the chariness with which the hand of opulence was wont to dole out alms. But for all that we were merry, and as from time to time our glances fell upon the ever-shifting scene outside, our hearts grew warmer, and within the eyes the old dreams glimmered into fuller dawn. It was during a lull of conversation, and while the philanthropic mind, perchance, was wandering amid the outer throng, and doubtless quoting to itself

"Whene'er I take my walks abroad,"

that our privacy was abruptly broken into by the grimy apparition of a boy of ten; a ragged

little fellow—not the stereotyped edition of the street waif, but a cross between the bootblack and the infantine Italian with the violin. Where he had entered, and how, would have puzzled us to answer; but there he stood before us, as it were, in a majesty of insignificance. I have never had the features of a boy impress me as did his, and as I stole a covert glance at my companions I was pleased to find the evidence of more than ordinary interest in their faces. They gazed in attentive silence on the little fellow, as, with uncovered, frowzy head, he stepped forward boldly, yet with an air of deference as unlooked for as becoming.

"I don't want to bother you gentlemens," he began, in a frank but hesitating tone that rippled hurriedly along as he marked a general nod of indulgence for the interruption. "I don't want to bother nobody, but if I can raise fifty cents—and I've got a nickel—and if I can raise the rest—and it ain't much, you know—on'y forty-five—and if I can raise the rest—I tell you, gentlemens," he broke off abruptly, and speaking with italicized sincerity, "I want jist fifty cents, 'cause I can git a blackin'-box fer that, and brush and ever'thing, and you can bet if I had *that* I wouldn't haf to ast nobody fer nothin'! And I ain't got no father ner mother, ner brother ner—ner—no sisters, neether; but that don't make no difference, 'cause I'll work—at *anything*—yes, sir—when I can git anything to do—and I sleep jist any place—and I ain't had no breakfast—and, honest, gentlemens, I'm a good boy—I don't

swear ner smoke ner chew—but that's all right—on'y if you'll—jist make up forty-five between you—and that's on'y fifteen cents apiece—I'll thank you, I will, and I'll jist do anything—and it's coming Christmas, and I'll roll in the nickels, don't you fergit—if I on'y got a box—'cause I throw up a 'bad' shine!—and I can git the box fer fifty cents if you gentlemens'll on'y make up forty-five between you." At the conclusion of this long and rambling appeal, the little fellow stood waiting with an eager face for a response.

A look of stoical deliberation played about the features of the oldest member of the group, as with an air of seriousness, which, I think, even the boy recognized as affected, he asked:

"And you couldn't get a box like that for—say forty cents? Fifty cents looks like a lot of money to lay out in the purchase of a blacking-box."

The boy smiled wisely as he answered:

"Yes, it might look big to a feller that ain't up on prices, but *I* think it's *cheap,* 'cause it's a second-hand box, and a *new* one would cost seventy-five cents anyhow—'thout no brushes ner nothin'!"

In the meantime I had dropped into the little fellow's palm the only coin I had in my possession, and we all laughed as he closed his thanks with: "Oh, come, Cap, go the *other* nickel, er I won't git out o' here with *half* enough!" and at that he turned to the former speaker.

"Well, really," said that gentleman, fumbling in

his pockets, "I don't believe I've got a dime with me."

"A *dime,*" said the little fellow, with a look of feigned compassion. "Ain't got a dime? Maybe I'd loan you *this* one!" And we all laughed again.

"Tell you what do now," said the boy, taking advantage of the moment, and looking coaxingly into the smiling eyes of the gentleman still fumbling vainly in his pockets.—"Tell you what do: you borry twenty cents of the man that stays behind the counter there, and then we'll go the other fifteen, and that'll make it, and I'll skip out o' here a little the flyest boy you ever see! What do ye soy?" And the little fellow struck a Pat Rooney attitude that would have driven the original inventor mad with envy.

"Give him a quarter!" laughed the gentleman appealed to.

"And here's the other dime," and as the little fellow clutched the money eagerly, he turned; and in a tone of curious gravity, he said:

"Now, honest, gentlemens, I ain't a-givin' you no *game* about the box—'cause a new one costs seventy-five cents, and the one I've got—I mean the one I'm a-goin' to git—is jist as *good* as a new one, on'y it's *second-hand;* and I'm much oblige', gentlemens—honest, I am—and if ever I give you a shine you can jist bet it don't cost you nothin'!"

And with this expression of his gratitude, the little fellow vanished as mysteriously as he had at first appeared.

"That boy hasn't a bad face," said the first speaker—"wide between the eyes—full forehead—good mouth, denoting firmness—altogether, a good, square face."

"And a noble one," said I, perhaps inspired to that rather lofty assertion by the rehearsal of the good points noted by my more observant companion.

"Yes, and an honest, straightforward way of talking, I would say," continued that gentleman. "I only noted one thing to shake my faith in that particular, and that was in his latest reference to the box. You'll remember his saying he was 'giving us no game' about it, whereas he had not been accused of such a thing."

"Oh, he meant about the price, don't you remember?" said I.

"No," said the gentleman at the counter, "you're both wrong. He only threw in that remark because he thought I suspected him, for he recognized me just the instant before that speech, and it confused him, and with some reason, as you will see:—On my way to supper only last night, I overtook that same little fellow in charge of an old man who was in a deplorable state of drunkenness; and you know how slippery the streets were. I think if that old man fell a single time he fell a dozen, and once so violently that I ran to his assistance and helped him to his feet. I thought him badly hurt at first, for he gashed his forehead as he fell, and I helped the little fellow to take him into a drug-store, where the

wound, upon examination, proved to be nothing more serious than to require a strip of plaster. I got a good look at the boy, there, however, and questioned him a little; and he said the man was his father, and he was taking him home; and I gathered further from his talk that the man was a confirmed inebriate. Now you'll remember the boy told us here a while ago he had no father, and when he recognized me a moment since and found himself caught in one 'yarn,' at least, he very naturally supposed I would think his entire story a fabrication, hence the suspicious nature of his last remarks, and the sudden transition of his manner from that of real delight to gravity, which change, in my opinion, rather denotes lying to be a new thing to him. I can't be mistaken in the boy, for I noticed, as he turned to go, a bald place on the back of his head, the left side, a 'trade-mark,' first discovered last evening, as he bent over the prostrate form of his father."

"I noticed a thin spot in his hair," said I, "and wondered at the time what caused it."

"And don't you know?"

I shook my head.

"Coal-bins and entry floors.—That little fellow hasn't slept within a bed for years, perhaps."

"But he told you, as you say, last night, he was taking the old man home?"

"Yes, home! I can imagine that boy's home. There are myriads like it in the city here—a cellar or a

shed—a box-car or a loft in some old shop, with a father to chase him from it in his sober interludes, and to hold him from it in unconscious shame when helplessly drunk. 'Home, Sweet Home!' That boy has heard it on the hand-organ, perhaps, but never in his heart—you couldn't grind it out of there with a thousand cranks."

The remainder of that day eluded me somehow; I don't know how or where it passed. I suppose it just dropped into a comatose condition, and so slipped away "unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown."

But one clear memory survives—an experience so vividly imprinted on my mind that I now recall its every detail: Entering the Union Depot that evening to meet the train that was to carry me away at six o'clock, muffled closely in my overcoat, yet more closely muffled in my gloomy thoughts, I was rather abruptly stopped by a small boy with a cry of: "Here, you man with the cigar; don't you want them boots blacked? Shine 'em fer ten cents! Shine 'em fer a nickel—on'y you mustn't give me away on that," he added, dropping on his knees near the entrance, and motioning me to set my foot upon the box.

It was then too dark for me to see his face clearly, but I had recognized the voice the instant he had spoken, and had paused and looked around.

"Oh, you'll have plenty o' time," he urged, guessing at the cause of my apparent hesitation. "None o' the trains on time to-night—on'y the Panhandle, and she's jist a-backin' in—won't start fer thirty

minutes," and he again beckoned, and rattled a seductive tattoo on the side of his box.

"Well," said I, with a compromising air, "come inside, then, out of the cold."

"'G'inst the rules—cops won't have it. They jist fired me out o' there not ten minutes ago. Oh, come, Cap; step out here; it won't take two minutes," and the little fellow spat professionally upon his brush, with a covert glance of pleasure as he noted the apparent success of the maneuver. "You don't *live* here, I'll bet," said the boy, setting the first boot on the box, and pausing to blow his hands.

"How do you know that? Did you never see me here before?"

"No, I never *see* you here before, but that ain't no reason. I can tell you don't live here by them shoes—'cause they've been put up in some little pennyroyal shop,—that's how. When you want a fly shoe you want to git her put up som'er's where they know somepin' about style. They's good enough *metal* in that shoe, on'y she's about two years off in *style*."

"You're posted, then, in shoes," said I, with a laugh.

"I ort to be," he went on, pantingly, a brush in either hand gyrating with a velocity that jostled his hat over his eyes, leaving most plainly exposed to my investigative eye the trade-mark before alluded to; "I ort to be posted in shoes, 'cause I ain't done nothin' but black 'em fer five years."

"You're an old hand, then, at the business," said

I. "I didn't know but maybe you were just starting out. What's an outfit like that worth?"

"Thinkin' o' startin' up?" he asked, facetiously.

"Oh, no," said I, good-humoredly. "I just asked out of idle curiosity. That's a new box, ain't it?"

"New!" he repeated with a laugh. "Put up that other hoof. *New?* W'y, if that box had ever had eyes like a human it would 'a' been a-wearin' specs by this time; that's a old, bald-headed box, with one foot in the grave."

"And what did the old fellow cost you?" I asked, highly amused at the quaint expressions of the boy.

"Cost? Cost nothin'—on'y about a' hour's work. I made that box myse'f, 'bout four year ago."

"Ah!" said I.

"Yes," he went on, "they don't cost nothin'; the boys makes 'em out o' other boxes, you know. Some of 'em gits 'em made, but they ain't no good—ain't no better'n this kind."

"So that didn't cost you anything?" said I, "though I suspect you wouldn't like to part with it for less than—well, I don't know how much money to say—seventy-five cents maybe—would anything less than seventy-five cents buy it?" I craftily interrogated.

"Seventy-five cents! W'y, what's the matter with you, man? I could git a cart-load of 'em fer seventy-five cents. I'll take yer measure fer one like it fer fifteen, too quick!" and the little fellow leaned back from his work and laughed up in my face with absolute derision.

I pulled my hat more closely down for fear of recognition, but was reassured a moment later as he went on:

"Wisht you lived here; you'd be old fruit fer us fellows. I can see you now a-takin' wind—and we'd give it to you mighty slick now, don't you fergit!" and as the boy renewed his work, I think his little, ragged body shook less with industry than mirth.

"Wisht I'd struck you 'bout ten o'clock this morning!" and, as he spoke, he paused again and looked up in my face with real regret. "Oh, you'd 'a' been the loveliest sucker of 'em all! W'y, you'd 'a' went the whole pot yerse'f!"

"How do you mean?" said I, dropping the cigar I held.

"How do I mean? Oh, you don't want to smoke this thing again after its a-rollin' round in the dirt!"

"Why, you don't smoke," said I, reaching for the cigar he held behind him.

"*Me?* Oh, what you givin' me?"

"Come, let me have it," I said, sharply, drawing a case from my pocket and taking out another cigar.

"Oh, you want a *light,*" he said, handing me the stub and watching me wistfully. "Couldn't give us a fresh cigar, could you, Cap?"

"I don't know," said I, as though deliberating on the matter. "What was that you were going to tell me just now? You started to tell me what a 'lovely sucker' I'd have been had you met me this morning. How did you mean?"

"Give me a cigar and I'll tell you. Oh, come, now, Cap; give me a smoker and I'll give you the whole game. I will, now, honest!"

I held out the open case.

"Nothin' mean about you, is they?" he said, eagerly taking a fresh cigar in one hand and the stub in the other. "A ten-center, too—*oh, I guess not!*" But, to my surprise, he took the stub between his lips, and began opening his coat. "Guess I'll jist fat this daisy, and save 'er up for Christmas. No, I won't either," he broke in suddenly, with a bright, keen flash of second thought. "Tell you what I'll do," holding up the cigar and gazing at it admiringly; "she's a ten-center all right, ain't she?"

I nodded.

"And worth every cent of it, too, ain't she?"

"Every cent of it," I repeated.

"Then give me a nickel, and she's yourn—'cause if you can afford to *give* this to me fer nothin', looks like I ort to let you have it fer half-price"; and as I laughingly dropped the nickel in his hand he concluded, "And they's nothin' mean about me, neither!"

"Now, go on with your story," said I. "How about that 'game' you were 'giving,' this morning?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Cap. Us fellers has got to lay fer ever' nickel, 'cause none of us is bondholders; and they's days and days together when we don't make enough to even starve on.—What I mean is, we on'y make enough to pay fer aggervatin' our ap-

petites with jist about enough chuck to keep us starvin'-hungry. So, you see, when a feller ain't got nothin' else to do, and his appetite won't sleep in the same bunk with him, he's bound to git on to somepin' crooked and git up all sorts o' dodges to git along. Some gives 'em one thing, and some another, but you bet they got to be mighty slick now, 'cause people won't have 'orphans,' and 'fits,' and 'cripples,' and 'drunk fathers,' and 'mothers that eats morphine,' and 'white-swellin',' and 'consumption,' and all that sort o' taffy! Got to git 'er down finer'n that! But *I* been a-gittin' in my work all the same, don't you fergit! You won't ever blow, now?"

"How could I 'blow,' and what if I did?—I don't live here," I replied.

"Well, you better never blow, anyhow; 'cause if ever us duffers would git on to it you'd be a sp'iled oyster!"

"Go on," said I, with an assuring tone.

"The lay I'm on jist now," he continued, dropping his voice and looking cautiously around, "is a-hidin' my box and a-rushin' in, suddent-like, where they's a crowd o' nobs a-talkin' politics er somepin', and a-jist startin' in, and 'fore they know *what's* a-comin' I'm a-flashin' up a nickel er a dime, and a-tellin' 'em if I on'y had enough more to make fifty cents I could buy a blackin'-box, and wouldn't have to ast no boot o' my grandmother! And two minutes chinnin' does it, don't you see, cause *they* don't know nothin' 'bout blackin'-boxes; they're jist

as soft as *you* air. They got an idy, maybe, that blackin'-boxes comes all the way from Chiny, with cokeynut whiskers packed 'round 'em; and I make it solid by a-sayin' I'm on'y goin' to git a *second-hand* box—see? But *that* ain't the p'int—it's the Mr. Nickel I' already *got.* Oh! it'll paralyze 'em ever' time! *Some*times fellers'll make up seventy-five cents er a dollar, and tell me to 'git a *new* box, and go into the business right.' That's a thing that always rattles me. Now, if they'd on'y growl a little and look like they was jist a-puttin' up 'cause the first one did, I can stand it; but when they go to pattin' me on the head, and a-tellin' me 'that's right,' and 'not to be afeard o' work,' and I'll 'come out all right,' and a-tellin' me to 'git a good substantial box while I'm a-gittin',' and a-ponyin' up handsome, there's where I weaken—I do, honest!" And never so plainly as at that moment did I see within his face and in his eyes the light of true nobility.

"You see," he went on, in a tone of voice half courage, half apology, "I' got a family on my hands, and I' jist *got* to git along somehow! I could git along on the square deal as long as *mother* was alive—'cause she'd *work*—but ever sence *she* died —and that was winter 'fore last—I've kind o' had to double on the old thing all sorts o' ways. But Sis don't know it. Sis, *she* thinks I'm the squarest muldoon in the business," and even side by side with the homely utterance a great sigh faltered from his lips.

"And who is Sis?" I inquired with new interest.

"Sis?" he repeated, knocking my foot from the box, and leaning back, still in the old position, his hat now lying on the ground beside him, and his frowzy hair tossed backward from the full, broad brow—"Who's Sis?" he repeated with an upward smile that almost dazzled me—"W'y, Sis is—is—w'y, Sis is the boss girl—and don't you fergit it!"

No need had he to tell me more than this. I knew who "Sis" was by the light of pride in the uplifted eyes; I knew who "Sis" was by the exultation in the broken voice, and the half-defiant tossing of the frowzy head; I knew who "Sis" was by the little, naked hands thrown upward openly; I knew who "Sis" was by the tear that dared to trickle through the dirt upon her ragged brother's face. And don't *you* forget it!

O that boy down there upon his knees!—there in the cinders and the dirt—so far, far down beneath us that we trample on his breast and grind our heels into his very heart; O that boy there, with his lifted eyes, and God's own glory shining in his face, has taught me, with an eloquence beyond the trick of mellow-sounding words and metaphor, that love may find a purer home beneath the rags of poverty and vice than in all the great warm heart of Charity.

I hardly knew what impulse prompted me, but as the boy rose to his feet and held his hand out for the compensation for his work, I caught the little dingy palm close, close within my own, and

wrung it as I would have wrung the hand of some great conqueror.

The little fellow stared at me in wonderment, and although his lips were silent, I can but believe that had they parted with the utterance within his heart my feelings had received no higher recognition than the old contemptuous phrase, "Oh, what you givin' me?"

"And so you've got a family on your hands?" I inquired, recovering an air of simple curiosity, and toying in my pocket with some bits of change. "How much of a family?"

"On'y three of us now."

"Only three of you, eh? Yourself, and Sis, and —and—"

"The old man," said the boy, uneasily; and after a pause, in which he seemed to swallow an utterance more bitter, he added, "And he ain't no good on earth!"

"Can't work?" I queried.

"*Won't* work," said the boy, bitterly. "He *won't* work—he won't do nothin'—on'y *budge!* And I haf to steer him in ever' night, 'cause the cops won't pull him any more—they won't let him in the station-house more'n they'd let him in a parler, 'cause he's a plum' goner now, and liable to croak any minute."

"Liable to what?" said I.

"Liable to jist keel over—wink out, you know—'cause he has fits—kind o' jimjams, I guess. Had a fearful old matinée with him last night! You

see he comes all sorts o' games on me, and I haf to put up fer him—'cause he's *got* to have *whisky,* and if we can on'y keep him about so full he's a regular lamb; but he don't stand no monkeyin' when he wants whisky, now you bet! Sis can handle him better'n me, but *she's* been a-losin' her grip on him lately—you see Sis ain't stout any more, and been kind o' sick-like so long she humors him, you know, more'n she'd ort. And he couldn't git on his pins at all yisterday morning, and Sis sent fer me, and I took him down a pint, and that set him a-runnin' so that when I left he made Sis give up a quarter he saw me slip her; and it jist happened I run into him that evening and got him in, or he'd 'a' froze to death. I guess he must 'a' kind o' had 'em last night, 'cause he was the wildest man you ever see—saw grasshoppers with paper-collars on, and old sows with feather-duster tails—the durndest program you ever heard of! And he got so bad onc't he was a-goin' to *belt* Sis, and did *try* it: and—and I had to chug him one or he'd 'a' done it. And then he cried, and *Sis* cried, and *I* cri—, I— *Dern him!* you can bet yer life *I* didn't cry!" And as the boy spoke, the lips quivered into stern compression, the little hands gripped closer at his side, but for all that the flashing eye grew blurred and the lids dropped downward.

"That's a boss shine on them shoes."

I was mechanically telling over in my hand the three small coins I had drawn from my pocket.

"That *is* a nice job!" said I, gazing with an un-

usual show of admiration at the work; "and I thought," continued I, with real regret, "that I had two dimes and a nickel here, and was thinking that, as these were Christmas times, I'd just give you a quarter for your work."

"Honest, Cap?"

"Honest!" I repeated, "but the fact is the two dimes, as I thought they were, are only two three-cent pieces, so I have only eleven cents in change, after all."

"Spect they'd change a bill fer you 'crost there at the lunch-counter," he suggested, with charming artlessness.

"Won't have time—there's my train just coupling.—But take this—I'll see you again sometime, perhaps."

"How big a bill is it you *want* changed?" asked the little fellow, with a most acquisitive expression, and a swift glance at our then lonely surroundings.

"I only have one bill with me," said I, nervously, "and that's a five."

"Well, here then," said the boy, hurriedly, with another and more scrutinizing glance about him—"guess I can 'commodate you." And as I turned in wonder, he drew from some mysterious recess in the lining of his coat a roll of bills, from which he hastily detached four in number, then returned the roll; and before I had recovered from my surprise, he had whisked the note from my fingers and left in my hand instead the proper change.

"This is on the dead, now, Cap. Don't you ever

cheep about me havin' wealth, you know; 'cause it ain't *mine*—that is, it *is* mine, but I'm a— There goes yer train. Ta-ta!"

"The day before Christmas," said I, snatching his hand, and speaking hurriedly—"the day before Christmas I'm coming back, and if you'll be here when the five-thirty train rolls in you'll find a man that wants his boots blacked—maybe to get married in, or something—anyway he'll want a shine like this, and he'll come prepared to pay the highest market price—do you understand?"

"You jist tell that feller fer me," said the boy, eclipsing the twinkle of one eye, and dropping his voice to an inflection of strictest confidence—"you jist tell that feller fer me that I'm his oyster!"

"And you'll meet him, sure?" said I.

"I will," said the boy. And he kept his word.

My ride home was an incoherent fluttering of the wings of time, in which travail one fretful hour was born, to gasp its first few minutes helplessly; then moan, roll over and kick out its legs and sprawl about; then crawl a little—stagger to its feet and totter on; then tumble down a time or two and knock its empty head against the floor and howl; then loom up awkwardly on gangling legs, too much in their own way to comprehend that they were in the way of everybody else; then limp a little as it worried on—drop down exhausted—moan again—toss up its hands—shriek out, and die in violent convulsions.

We have all had that experience of the car-wheels—had them enter into conversation with us as we gaily embarked upon some pleasant trip, perhaps; had them rattle off in scraps of song, or lightly twit us with some dear one's name, or even go so far as to laugh at us and mock us for some real or fancied dereliction of car-etiquette. I shall ever have good reason to remember how once upon a time a boy of fourteen, though greatly undersized, told the conductor he was only ten, and although the unsuspecting official accepted the statement as a truth, with the proper reduction in the fare, the car-wheels called that boy a "liar" for twenty miles—and twenty miles as long and tedious as he has ever compassed in his journey through this vale of tears.

The car-wheels on this bitter winter evening were not at all communicative. They were sullen and morose. They didn't feel like singing, and they wouldn't laugh. They had no jokes, and if there was one peculiar quality of tone they possessed in any marked degree it was that of sneering. They had a harsh, discordant snarl, as it seemed, and were spiteful and insinuating.

The topic they had chosen for that night's consideration was evidently of a very complex and mysterious nature, and they gnawed and mumbled at it with such fierceness, and, withal, such selfishness, I could only catch a flying fragment of it now and then, and that, I noticed, was of the coarsest fiber of intelligence, and of slangy flavor. Listen-

ing with the most painful interest, I at last made out the fact that the inflection seemed to be in the interrogative, and, with anxiety the most intense, I slowly came to comprehend that they were desirous of ascertaining the exact distance between two given points, but the proposition seemed determined not to round into fuller significance than to query mockingly, "How *fur* is it? How *fur* is it? How *fur,* how *fur,* how *fur* is it?" and so on to a most exasperating limit. As this senseless phrase was repeated and reiterated in its growing harshness and unchanging intonation, the relentless pertinacity of the query grew simply agonizing, and when at times the car door opened to admit a brakeman, or the train-boy, who had everything to sell but what I wanted, the emphasized refrain would lift me from my seat and drag me up and down the aisle. When the phrase did eventually writhe round into form and shade more tangible, my relief was such that I sat down, and in my fancy framed a grim, unlovely tune that suited it, and hummed with it, in an undertone of dismal satisfaction:

"How fur—how fur
Is it from here—
From here to Happiness?"

When I returned, that same refrain rode back into the city with me! All the gay metropolis was robing for the banquet and the ball. All the windows of the crowded thoroughfares were kindling

into splendor. Along the streets rode lordly carriages, so weighted down with costly silks, and furs, and twinkling gems, and unknown treasures in unnumbered packages, that one lone ounce of needed charity would have snapped their axles, and a feather's weight of pure benevolence would have splintered every spoke.

And the old refrain rode with me through it all—as stoical, relentless and unchangeable as fate—and in the same depraved and slangy tone in which it seemed to find an especial pride, it sang, and sang again:

"How fur—how fur
Is it from here—
From here to Happiness?"

The train, that for five minutes had been lessening in speed, toiled painfully along, and as I arose impatiently and reached behind me for my overcoat, a cheery voice cried, "Hello, Cap! Want a lift? I'll he'p you with that benjamin"; and as I looked around I saw the grimy features of my little hero of the brush and box.

"Hello!" said I, as much delighted as surprised. "Where did you drop from?"

"Oh, I collared this old hearse a mile er so back yonder," said the little fellow, gaily, standing on the seat behind me and holding up the coat. "Been a-doin' circus-business on the steps out there fer half an hour. You bet I had my eye on *you,* all the same, though!"

"You had, eh?" I exclaimed, gladly, although I instinctively surmised his highest interest in me was centered in my pocketbook. "You had, eh?" I repeated with more earnestness—"Well, I'm glad of that, Charlie—or, what *is* your name?"

"Squatty," said the boy. Then noticing the look of surprise upon my face, he added soberly: "That ain't my sure-enough name, you know; that's what the *boys* calls me. *Sis* calls me Jamesy."

"Well, Jamesy," I continued, buttoning my collar and drawing on my gloves, "I'm mighty glad to see you, and if you don't believe it, just go down in that right-hand overcoat-pocket and you'll find out."

The little fellow needed no second invitation, and as he drew forth a closely folded package the look of curiosity upon his face deepened to one of blank bewilderment.

"Open it," said I, smiling at the puzzled little face; "open it—it's for you."

"Oh, here, Cap," said the boy, dropping the package on the seat, and holding up a rigid finger, "you're a-givin' me this, ain't you?"

"I'm giving you the package, certainly," said I, somewhat bewildered. "Open it—it's a Christmas present for you—open it!"

"What's your idy o' layin' fer me?" asked the boy, with a troubled and uneasy air. "I've been a-givin' you square business right along, ain't I?"

"Why, Jamesy," said I, as I vaguely comprehended the real drift of his thought, "the package *is* for you, and if you won't open it, I will," and as I

spoke I began unfolding it. "Here," said I, "is a pair of gloves a little girl about your size told me to give to you, because I was telling her about you, over where I live, and it's 'a clear case,'" and I laughed lightly to myself as I noticed a slow flush creeping to his face. "And here," said I, "is a bang-up pair of good old-fashioned socks, and, if they'll fit you, there's an old woman that wears specs and a mole on her nose, told me to tell you, for her, that she knit them for your Christmas present, and if you don't wear them she'll never forgive you. And here," I continued, "is a cap, as fuzzy as a woolly-worm, and as warm a cap, I reckon, as you ever stood on your head in; it's a cheap cap, but I bought it with my own money, and money that I worked mighty hard to get, because I ain't rich; now, if I was rich, I'd buy you a plug; but I've got an idea that this little, old, woolly cap, with earbobs to it, and a snapper to go under your chin, don't you see, won't be a bad cap to knock around in, such weather as this. What do you say now! Try her on once," and as I spoke I turned to place it on his head.

"Oomh-ooh!" he negatively murmured, putting out his hand, his closed lips quivering—the little frowzy head drooping forward, and the ragged shoes shuffling on the floor.

"Come," said I, my own voice growing curiously changed; "won't you take these presents? They are yours; you must accept them, Jamesy, not because they're worth so very much, or because they're very

fine," I continued, bending down and folding up the parcel, "but because, you know, I want you to, and—and—you must take them; you must!" and as I concluded, I thrust the tightly folded parcel beneath his arm, and pressed the little tattered elbow firmly over it.

"There you are," said I.—"Freeze on to it, and we'll skip off here at the avenue. Come."

I hardly dared to look behind me till I found myself upon the street, but as I threw an eager glance over my shoulder I saw the little fellow following, not bounding joyfully, but with a solemn step, the little parcel hugged closely to his side, and his eyes bent soberly upon the frozen ground.

"And how's Sis by this time?" I asked cheerily, flinging the question backward, and walking on more briskly.

"'Bout the same," said the boy, brightening a little, and skipping into a livelier pace.

"About the same, eh? and how's that?" I asked.

"Oh, she can't git around much like she used to, you know; but she's a-gittin' better all the time. She set up mighty nigh all day yisterday"; and as the boy spoke the eyes lifted with the old flash, and the little frowzy head tossed with the old defiance.

"Why, she's not down sick?" said I, a sudden ache of sorrow smiting me.

"Yes," replied the boy, "she's been bad a long time. You see," he broke in by way of explanation, "she didn't have no shoes ner nothin' when winter

come, and kind o' took cold, you know, and that give her the whoopin'-cough so's she couldn't git around much. You jist ort to see her now!—Oh, she's a-gittin' all right *now,* you can bet! and she said yisterday she'd be plum well Christmas, and that's on'y to-morry.—*Guess not!*" and as the little fellow concluded this exultant speech, he circled round me, and then shot forward like a rocket.

"Hi! Jamesy!" I called after him, pausing at a stairway and stepping in the door.

The little fellow joined me in an instant. "Want that shine now?" he inquired with panting eagerness.

"Not now, Jamesy," said I, "for I'm going to be quite busy for a while. This is my stopping-place here—the second door on the right, up-stairs, remember—and I work there when I'm in the city, and I sometimes sleep there, when I work late. And now I want to ask a very special favor of you," I continued, taking a little sealed packet from my pocket: "here's a little box that you're to take to Sis, with my compliments—the compliments of the season, you understand,—and tell her I sent it, with particular directions that she shouldn't break it open till Christmas morning—not till Christmas morning, understand! Then you tell her that I would like very much to come and see her, and if she says all right,—and you must give me a good 'send-off,' and she'll say all right if 'Jamesy' says all right,—then come back here, say two hours from now, or three

hours, or to-night, anyway, and we'll go down and see Sis together—what do you say?"

The boy nodded dubiously. "Honest—must I do all that, sure enough?"

"Will you?" said I; "that's what I want to know"; and I pushed back the dusky little face and looked into the bewildered eyes.

"*Solid?*" he queried, gravely.

"Solid," I repeated, handing him the box. "Will you come?"

"W'y, 'course I will, on'y I was jist a-thinkin'—"

"Just thinking what?" said I, as the little fellow paused abruptly and shook the box suspiciously at his ear. "Just thinking what?" I repeated; "for I must go now; good-by.—Just thinking what?"

"Oh, nothin'," said the boy, backing off and staring at me in a phase of wonder akin to awe.—"Nothin', on'y I was jist a-thinkin' that you was a little the curiousest rooster *I* ever see."

Three hours later, as I sat alone, he came in upon me timidly to say he had not been home yet, having "run acrost the old man jist a-bilin', and had to git him corralled 'fore he dropped down som'er's in the snow; but I'm a-gittin 'long bully with him *now*," he added with a deep sigh of relief, "'cause he's so full he'll haf to let go purty soon. Say you'll be here?"

I nodded silently, and he was gone.

The merry peals of laughter rang up from the streets like mockery. The jingling of bells, the clat-

ter and confusion of the swarming thoroughfares, flung up to me not one glad murmur of delight; the faint and far-off blaring of a dreamy waltz, blown breeze-like over the drowsy ear of night, had sounded sweeter to me had I stood amidst the band, with every bellowing horn about my ears, and the drums and clashing cymbals howling mad.

I couldn't work, I couldn't read, I couldn't rest; I could only pace about. I heard the clock strike ten, and strike it hard; I heard it strike eleven, viciously; and twelve it held out at arm's length, and struck it full between the eyes, and let it drop—stone dead. O I saw the blood ooze from its ears, and saw the white foam freeze upon its lips! I was alone—alone!

It was three o'clock before the boy returned.

"Been a long while," he began, "but I had a fearful time with the old man, and he went on so when I *did* git him in I was 'most afeard to leave him; but he kind o' went to sleep at last, and Molly *she* come over to see how Sis was a-gittin'; and Sis said she'd like to see *you* if you'd come *now,* you know, while they ain't no racket goin' on."

"Come, then," said I, buttoning my coat closely at the throat, "I am ready"; and a moment later we had stepped into the frosty night. We moved along in silence, the little fellow half running, half sliding along the frozen pavement in the lead; and I noted, with a pleasurable thrill, that he had donned the little fuzzy cap and mittens, and from time to

time was flinging, as he ran, admiring glances at his shadow on the snow.

Our way veered but a little from the very center of the city, but led mainly along through narrow streets and alley-ways, where the rear ends of massive business blocks had dwindled down to insignificant proportions to leer grimly at us as we passed little grated windows and low, scowling doors. Occasionally we passed a clump of empty boxes, barrels, and such débris and merchandise as had been crowded pell-mell from some inner storage by their newer and more dignified companions; and now and then we passed an empty bus, bulging up in the darkness like a behemoth of the olden times; or, jutting from still narrower passages, the sloping ends of drays and carts innumerable. And along even as forbidding a defile as this we groped until we came upon a low, square brick building that might have served at one time as a wash-house, or, less probably, perhaps, a dairy. There was but one window in the front, and that but little larger than an ordinary pane of glass. In the sides, however, and higher up, was a row of gratings, evidently designed more to serve as ventilation than as openings for light. There was but one opening, an upright doorway, half above ground, half below, with little narrow side-steps leading down to it. A light shone dimly from the little window, and as the boy motioned me to pause and listen, a sound of female voices talking in undertones was audible,

mingled with a sound like that of some one snoring heavily.

"Hear the old man a-gittin' in his work?" whispered the boy.

I nodded. "He's asleep?"

"You *bet* he's asleep!" said the boy, still in a whisper; "and he'll jist about stay with it thataway fer five hours, anyhow. What time you got now, Cap?"

"A quarter now till four," I replied, peering at my watch.

"W'y, it's *Christmas,* then!" he cried in muffled rapture of delight; but abruptly checking his emotion, he beckoned me a little farther from the door, and spoke in a confidential whisper.

"Cap, look here, now; 'fore we go in I want you to promise me one thing—'cause you can fix it and *she'll* never drop! Now, here, I want to put up a job on *Sis,* you understand!"

"What!" I exclaimed, starting back and staring at the boy in amazement. "Put up a job on Sis?"

"Oh, look here, now, Cap; you ain't a-goin' back on a feller like that!" broke in the little fellow, in a mingled tone of pleading and reproof; "and if you don't help a feller I'll haf to wait till broad daylight, 'cause we ain't got no clock."

"No clock!" I repeated with increased bewilderment.

"Oh, come, Cap, what do you say? It ain't no lie, you know; all you got to do'll be to jist tell Sis it's Christmas—as though you didn't want *me* to

hear, you know; and then she'll git my 'Christmas gift!' *first,* you know;—and, oh, lordy! won't she think she's played it fine!" And as I slowly comprehended the meaning of the little fellow's plot I nodded my willingness to assist in "putting up the job."

"Now, hold on a second!" continued the little fellow, in the wildest glee, darting through an opening in a high board fence a dozen steps away, and in an instant reappearing with a bulky parcel, which, as he neared me, I discovered was a paper flour-sack half filled, the other half lapped down and fastened with a large twine string. "Now this stuff," he went on excitedly, "you must juggle in without Sis seein' it—here, shove it under your 'ben,' here—there—that's business! Now when you go in, you're to set down with the other side to'rds the bed, you see, and when Sis *hollers 'Christmas gift,'* you know, you jist kind o' let it slide down to the floor like, and I'll nail it slick enough—though I'll p'tend, you know, it *ain't* Christmas yet, and look sold out, and say it wasn't fair fer you to tell her, and all that; and then I'll open up suddent-like, and if you don't see old Sis bug out them eyes of hern I don't want a cent!" And as the gleeful boy concluded this speech, he put his hands over his mouth and dragged me down the little, narrow steps.

"Here's that feller come to see you, Sis!" he announced abruptly, opening the door and peering in. "Come on," he said, turning to me. I followed,

closing the door, and looking curiously around. A squabby, red-faced woman, sitting on the edge of a low bed, leered upon me, but with no salutation. An old cook-stove, propped up with bricks, stood back against the wall directly opposite, and through the warped and broken doors in front sent out a dismal suggestion of the fire that burned within. At the side of this, prone upon the floor, lay the wretched figure of a man, evidently in the deepest stage of drunkenness, and thrown loosely over him was an old tattered piece of carpet and a little checkered shawl.

There was no furniture to speak of; one chair—and that was serving as a stand—stood near the bed, a high hump-shouldered bottle sitting on it, a fruit-can full of water, and a little dim and smoky lamp that glared sulkily.

"Jamesy, can't you git the man a cheer er somepin'?" queried a thin voice from the bed; at which the red-faced woman rose reluctantly with the rather sullen words: "He can sit here, I reckon," while the boy looked at me significantly and took up a position near the "stand."

"So this is Sis?" I said, with reverence.

The little haggard face I bent above was beautiful. The eyes were dark and tender—very tender, and though deeply sunken were most childish in expression and star-pure and luminous. She reached a wasted little hand out to me, saying simply: "It was mighty good in you to give them things to Jamesy, and send me that mo—that—that little box,

you know—on'y I guess I—I won't need it." As she spoke a smile of perfect sweetness rested on the face, and the hand within my own nestled in dove-like peace.

The boy bent over the white face from behind and whispered something in her ear, trailing the little laughing lips across her brow as he looked up.

"Not now, Jamesy; wait a while."

"Ah!" said I, shaking my head with feigned merriment, "don't you two go to plotting about me!"

"Oh, hello, no, Cap?" exclaimed the boy, assuringly. "I was on'y jist a-tellin' Sis to ast you if she mightn't open that box *now*—honest! And you jist ask her if you don't believe me—*I* won't listen." And the little fellow gave me a look of the most penetrative suggestiveness; and when a moment later the glad words, "Christmas gift! Jamesy," rang out quaveringly in the thin voice, the little fellow snatched the sack up, in a paroxysm of delight, and before the girl had time to lift the long dark lashes once upon his merry face, he had emptied its contents out tumultuously upon the bed.

"You got it on to me, Sis!" cried the little fellow, dancing wildly round the room; "got it on to me *this* time! but I'm *game,* don't you fergit, and don't put up nothin' snide! How'll them shoes there ketch you? and how's this fer a cloak?—is them enough beads to suit you? And how's this fer a hat—feather and all? And how's this fer a dress—made and ever'thing? and I'd 'a' got a *corsik* with it if he'd on'y had any little enough. *You* won't look fly ner

nothin' when you throw all that style on you in the morning!—*Guess not!*" And the delighted boy went off upon another wild excursion round the room.

"Lean down here," said the girl, a great light in her eyes and the other slender hand sliding from beneath the covering. "Here is the box you sent me, and I've *opened* it—it wasn't *right* you know, but somepin' kind o' said to open it *'fore* morning—and —and I opened it." And the eyes seemed asking my forgiveness, yet were filled with great bewilderment. "You see," she went on, the thin voice falling in a fainter tone, "I *knowed* that money in the box—that is, the *bills*—I *knowed* them bills 'cause *one* of 'em had a ink-spot on it, and the other ones had been pinned with it—they *wasn't* pinned together when *you* sent 'em, but the holes was in where they *had been* pinned, and they was all pinned together when *Jamesy* had 'em—'cause Jamesy used to have them very bills—he didn't think *I* knowed,—but onc't when he was asleep, and *father* was a-goin' through his clothes, I happened to find 'em in his coat 'fore *he* did; and I *counted* 'em, and hid 'em back ag'in, and father didn't find 'em, and Jamesy never knowed it.—I never said nothin', 'cause somepin' kind o' said to me it was all right; and somepin' kind o' said I'd git all these things here, too—on'y I won't need 'em, ner the money, nor nothin'. How did *you* get the money? That's all!"

The boy had by this time approached the bed, and was gazing curiously upon the solemn little face.

"What's the *matter* with you, Sis?" he asked in wonderment; "ain't you glad?"

"I'm *mighty* glad, Jamesy," she said, the little, thin hands reaching for his own. "Guess I'm *too* glad, 'cause I can't do nothin' on'y jist *feel* glad; and somepin' kind o' says that that's the gladdest glad in all the world. Jamesy!"

"Oh, pshaw, Sis! Why don't you tell a feller what's the matter?" said the boy, uneasily.

The white hands linked more closely with the brown, and the pure face lifted to the grimy one till they were blent together in a kiss.

"Be good to father, fer you know he used to be so good to us."

"O Sis! Sis!"

"Molly!"

The squabby, red-faced woman threw herself upon her knees and kissed the thin hands wildly and with sobs.

"Molly, somepin' kind o' says that *you* must dress me in the morning—but I won't need the hat, and you must take it home for Nannie— Don't cry so loud; you'll wake father."

I bent my head down above the frowzy one and moaned—moaned.

"And you, sir," went on the failing voice, reaching for my hand, "you—you must take this money

back—you must take it back, fer I don't need it. You must take it back and—and—give it—give it to the poor." And even with the utterance upon the gracious lips the glad soul leaped and fluttered through the open gates.

TALE OF A SPIDER

FIRST—I want it most distinctly understood that I am superstitious, notwithstanding the best half of my life, up to the very present, has been spent in the emphatic denial of that fact. And I am painfully aware that this assertion at so late a date can but place my former character in a most unenviable light; yet for reasons *you* will never know, I have, with all due deliberation, determined to hold the truth up stark and naked to the world, with the just acknowledgment shorn of all attempt at palliation or excuse, that for the best half of my life I have been simply a coward and a liar.

Second—From a careful and impartial study of my fellow beings, I have arrived at the settled conviction that nine men of every ten are just as superstitious as myself; yet, with the difference, that, for reasons I know, they refuse to acknowledge it openly, many of them dodging the admission even within their own ever curious and questioning minds.

Third—Most firmly fixed in this belief and intuitively certain of at least the inner confidence and sympathy of a grand majority of those who read, I

throw aside all personal considerations, defy all ridicule—all reason, if you like—in order to devote myself wholly to the narration of an actual experience that for three long weeks has been occurring with me nightly in this very room. You should hear me laugh about it in the daytime! Oh, I snap my fingers then, and whistle quite as carelessly and scornfully as you doubtless would; but at night—at night—and it's night now—I grow very, very serious somehow, and put all raillery aside, and here all in vain argue by the hour that it's nothing in the world but the baleful imaginings of a feverish mind, and the convulsive writhings of a dyspeptic fancy. But enough!—Even forced to admit that I'm a fool, I will tell my story.

Although by no means of a morbid or misanthropic disposition, the greater portion of my time I occupy in strict seclusion, here at my desk—for only when alone can I conscientiously indulge certain propensities of thinking aloud, talking to myself, leaping from my chair occasionally to dance a new thought round the room, or take it in my arms, and hug and hold and love it as I would a great, fat, laughing baby with a bunch of jingling keys.

Then there are times, too, when worn with work, and I find my pen dabbling by the wayside in sluggish blots of ink, that I delight to take up the old guitar which leans here in the corner, and twang among the waltzes that I used to know, or lift a most unlovely voice in half-forgotten songs whose withered notes of melody fall on me like dead

leaves, but whose crisp rustling still has power to waken from "the dusty crypt of darkened forms and faces" the glad convivial spirits that once thronged about me in the wayward past, and made my young life one long peal of empty merriment. Someway, I've lost the knack of wholesome laughter now, and for this reason, maybe, I so often find my fingers tangled in the strings of my guitar; for, after all, there is an indefinable something in the tone of a guitar that is not all of earth. I have often fancied that departed friends came back to hide themselves away in this old husk of song that we might pluck them forth to live again in quavering tones of tenderness and love and minor voices of remembrance that coax us on to Heaven. Pardon my vagaries.—I'm practical enough at times; at times I fail. But I must be clear to-night; I must be, and I will.

This night three weeks ago I had worked late, though on a task involving nothing that could possibly have warped my mind to an unnatural state, other than that of peculiar wakefulness; for although physically needful of rest, I felt that it was useless to retire; and so I wheeled my sofa in a cozy position near the stove, lighted a cigar (my chum Hays had left me four hours previous), and flinging myself down in languid pose best suiting the requirements of an aimless reverie, I resigned all serious complexities of thought and was wholly comfortable.

The silence of the night without was deep. Not

a footstep in the street below, and not a sound of any living earthly thing fell on the hearing, though that sense was whetted to such acuteness I could plainly hear the ticking of a clock somewhere across the street.

All things about the room were in their usual order. My letters on the desk were folded as I answered them, and filed away; my books were ranged in order, and my manuscripts tucked out of sight and mind, with no scrap of paper to remind me of my never-ended work, save the blank sheet that always lies in readiness for me to pounce upon with any vagrant thought that comes along, and close beside it the open inkstand and the idle pen.

I had reclined thus in utter passiveness of mind for half an hour perhaps, when suddenly I heard, or thought I heard, below me in the street, the sound of some stringed instrument. I rose on my elbow and listened. Some serenader, I guessed. Yes, I could hear it faintly, but—so far away it seemed, and indistinct. I arose, went to the window, raised it and leaned out; and as the sound grew fainter and failed entirely, I closed the window and sat down again; yet even as I did so the mysterious tones fell on my hearing plainer than before. I listened closely, and though little more than a ghost of sound, I still could hear, and quite audibly distinguish, the faint repeated twanging of the six open strings of a guitar—so plainly, indeed, that I instinctively recognized the irritating fact that both the "E" and "D" strings

were slightly out of tune. I turned with some strange impulse to my own instrument, and I must leave the reader to imagine the cold thrill of surprise and fear that crept over me as the startling conviction slowly dawned upon my mind that the sounds came from that unlooked-for quarter. The guitar was leaning in its old position in the corner, the face turned to the wall, and although I confess it with reluctance, full five minutes elapsed before I found sufficient courage to approach and pick it up; then I nearly dropped it in abject terror as a great, fat, blowzy spider ran across my hand and went scampering up the wall. What do you think of spiders, anyhow? You say "Wooh!" I say you don't know anything about spiders.

I examined first the wall to see if there might not be some natural cause for the mysterious sounds—some open crevice for the wind, some loosened and vibrating edge of paper, or perhaps, a bristle protruding from the plaster—but I found no evidence that could in any way afford an answer to the perplexing query. An old umbrella and a broom stood in the corner, but in neither of these inanimate objects could I find the vaguest explanation of the problem that so wholly and entirely possessed me.

I could not have been mistaken. It was no trick of fancy—no hallucination. I had not only listened to the sounds repeated, over and over, a dozen times at least, but I had recognized and measured the respective values of the tones; and as I turned, half in awe, took up the instrument and lightly

swept the strings, the positive proof, for the conviction jarred as discordantly upon my fancy as upon my ears—the two strings, "E" and "D," were out of tune.

I will no longer attempt the detail of my perturbed state of curiosity and the almost dazed condition of my mind; such an effort would at best be vain. But I sat down, doggedly, at last; and in a spirit of indifference the most defiant I could possibly assume, I ran the guitar up to a keen exultant key, and dashed off into a quickstep that made the dumb old echoes of the room leap up and laugh with melody. I was determined in my own mind to stave off the most unwholesome influence that seemed settling fog-like over me; and as the sharp twang of the strings rang out upon the night, and the rich vibrating chords welled up and overflowed the silence like a flood, the embers of old-time enthusiasm kindled in my heart and flamed up in a warmth of real delight. Suddenly, in the midst of this rapturous outburst, as with lifted face I stared ceilingward, my eyes again fell on that horrid spider, madly capering about the wall in a little circumference of a dozen inches, perhaps, wheeling and whirling up and down, and round and round again, as though laboring under some wild jubilant excitement.

I played on mechanically for a moment, my eyes riveted upon the grotesque antics of the insect, feeling instinctively that the music was producing this singular effect upon it. I was right; for, as I grad-

ually paused, the gyrations of the insect assumed a milder phase, and as I ceased entirely, the great bloated thing ran far out overhead and dropped suddenly a yard below the ceiling, and, pendent by its unseen thread, hung sprawled in the empty air above my face, so near I could have touched it with the lifted instrument. And then, even as I shrank back fearfully, a new line of speculation was suggested to my mind: I arose abruptly, leaned the guitar back in the corner, took up a book, and sat down at the desk, leaving the silence of the room intensified till in my nervous state of mind I almost fancied I could hear that spider whispering to itself, as above the open pages of the book I watched the space between it and the ceiling slowly widening, till at last the ugly insect dropped and disappeared behind the sofa.

I had not long to wait; nor was my curious mind placed any more at ease, when, at last, faint and far-off sounding as at first, I heard the eery twanging of the guitar—though this time I could with some triumphant pleasure note the fact that the instrument was in perfect tune. But to assure myself thoroughly that I could in no way be mistaken as to the mysterious cause, I arose and crept cautiously across the carpet until within easy reach of the guitar. I paused again to listen and convince myself beyond all doubt that the sounds were there produced. There could be no possible mistake about it. Then suddenly I caught and whirled the instrument around, and as I did so the spider darted

from the keyboard near the top, leaped to the broom-handle and fled up the wall.

I tried no more experiments that night, or rather morning—for it must have been three o'clock as I turned wearily away from the exasperating contemplation of the strange subject, turned down the lamp, then turned it up again, huddled myself into a shivering heap upon the sofa, and fell into an uneasy asleep, in which I dreamed that *I* was a spider—of Brobdingnagian proportions, and lived on men and women instead of flies, and had a web like a monster hammock, in which I swung myself out over the streets at night and fished up my prey with a hook and line—thought I caught more poets than anything else, and was just nibbling warily at my own bait, when the line was suddenly withdrawn, the hook catching me in the cheek, tearing out and letting me drop back with a sullen plunge into the great gulf of the night. And as I found myself, with wildly staring eyes, sitting bolt upright on the sofa, I saw the spider, just above my desk, lifted and flung upward by his magic line and thrown among the dusky shadows of the ceiling.

"Hays," said I to my chum in the early morning, as he came in on me, sitting at my desk and gazing abstractedly at an incoherent scrawl of ink upon the scrap of paper lying before me—"Hays," said I, "what's your opinion of spiders?"

"What's my opinion of spiders?" he queried, staring at me curiously.

"What's your opinion of spiders?" I repeated

with my first inflection—for Hays is a young man in the medical profession, and likes point, fact and brevity. "What I mean is this," I continued, "isn't it generally conceded that the spider is endowed with a higher order of intelligence than insects commonly?"

"I believe so," he replied with the same curious air, watching me narrowly; "I have a vague recollection of some incident illustrative of that theory in Goldsmith's 'Animated Nature,' or some equally veracious chronicle," with suggestive emphasis on the word "veracious." "Why do you ask?"

And, although half assured I would be sneered at for my pains, I went into a minute recountal of my strange experience of the night, winding up in a high state of excitement, doubtless intensified by the blandly smiling features of my auditor, who made no interruption whatever, and only looked at me at the conclusion of the dream with gratuitous compassion and concern. "Well!" said I uneasily, taking an impatient turn or two across the room. . . . "Well!" I repeated, pausing abruptly and glaring at the shrugged shoulders of my stoical companion, "why don't you say something?"

"Nothing to say, I suppose," he answered, turning on me with absolute severity. "You never listen to advice. Two months ago I told you to quit this night business—it would wreck you physically, mentally, every way. Why, look at you!" he continued in pitiless reproof, as I flew off on another nervous trip around the room. "Look at you! a

perfect crate of bones—no 'get-up' in your walk—no color in your face—no appetite—no anything but a wisp of shattered nerves, and a pair of howling-hungry eyes that do nothing but stare."

"It wouldn't seem that you did have much to say, upon the point, at least," I interrupted. "Never mind my physical condition; what do you think of my spider?"

"What do I think of your spider!" he repeated contemptuously, "why, I think it's a little the thinnest piece of twaddle I ever listened to!—And I think, further—"

"Hold on, now!" I exclaimed, a trifle warmed, but smiling; "I knew you'd have to sweat a while over that; but hold on—hold on! I have only told you the minor facts of the strange occurrence; the most startling and irrefutable portion yet remains. Now, listen! What I have already told you I pledge you on my honor is pure truth. I can offer nothing but my word for that. But I will close now—don't interrupt me, if you please: As I awakened from that dream, I saw that spider jerked from above the desk here—just as a small boy might whip up a fish-line—jerked by his own thread, of course.—Well, and I got up at once—came to the desk like this, feeling instinctively that that infernal spider had some object in lowering itself among my letters; and I found this scrap of paper, which I'll swear I left last night without one blot or line of ink or pencil on it.—I found this scrap of paper with this zigzag line—which you can see

was never made with human hand—scrawled across it, and the ink was yet wet when I picked it up. *Now*, what do you say?"

He took the scrap of paper in his hand half curiously, and then, as though ashamed of having betrayed so great a weakness, threw it back upon the desk with scarce a look.

"What do you say?" I repeated, in a tone of triumph.

"Well," he replied, "it is barely possible you did see a spider in this last instance, and I must confess that it is a much easier matter for me to imagine a spider dropping by accident into your inkstand and leaving the trail of his salvation across your writing-paper, than it is for me to fancy the fantastic insect plucking the strings of your guitar. In fact, the first part of your story won't do at all. I don't mean to intimate that your veracity is defective—not at all. But I do mean that you have overworked yourself of late, and that your brain needs rest."

"But," said I, pushing the scrap of paper toward him again, "you don't seem to recognize the fact that that ugly scrawl of ink means something. Look at it carefully; it's writing."

He again took the paper in his hand, but this time without a glance, and ere I could prevent him he had torn it in a half dozen pieces and flung it on the floor.

"What do you mean?" I cried resentfully, springing forward.

"Why, I mean that you're a babbling idiot," he answered in a tone half anger, half alarm; "and if you won't look after your own condition I'll do it for you, and in spite of you! You must quit this work—quit this room—quit everything, and come with me out in the fresh air, or you'll die; that's what I mean!"

Although he spoke with almost savage vehemence, I recognized, of course, the real promptings of his action, and smiled softly to myself as I gathered up the scattered scraps of paper from the carpet.

"Oh, we'll not quarrel," said I, seating myself patiently at the desk, and dipping my finger in the paste-cup—"we'll not quarrel about a little thing like this; only if you'll just wait a minute I'll show you that it does mean something."

I deftly joined the fragments in their proper places on a base of legal cap. "There!" said I good-naturedly, "now you can read it; but don't tear it again, please." I think I was very white when I said that, for my companion took the paper in his hand with at least a show of interest, and looked at it long and curiously.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, laying it back upon the desk before me: "I am really very sorry, but I am forced to acknowledge that I fail to find anything exactly tangible in it."

"Look," said I; "you see this capital that begins the line; the first letter?—It's a 'Y,' isn't it?"

"Yes; it looks a little like a 'Y'—or a 'G.'"

"No; it's a 'Y,'" said I, "and there's no more doubt about it than that this next one is an 'e.'"

"Well—"

"Well, this next letter is an 'S'—an old-fashioned 'S,' but it's an 'S' all the same, and you can't make anything else out of it; I've tried it, and it can't be done."

"Well, go on."

"This is a 'c,'" I continued.

"Go on; call it anything you like."

"No; but I want you to be thoroughly satisfied."

"Oh, do you? Well, it's a 'c,' then; go on."

"And this is an 'h.'"

"Go on."

"And this is an 'o'; you know that!"

"Yes; know it by the hole in it."

"Don't get funny. And this is an 'l.'"

"That's an 'l.'"

"This is an 'a.'"

"Close observer!"

"And that's an 'r'—and that's all."

"Well, you've got it all down to suit you; now, what does it spell?"

"What does it spell? Why, can't you read?" I exclaimed, flourishing the scrap triumphantly before his eyes. "It spells 'Ye Scholar!'—why, I could read it across the room!"

"Yes, or across the street," he answered caustically. "But come now!" he continued seriously,

"throw it aside for the present at least, and let's go out in the sunshine for a while. Here, light a cigar, and come along"; and he moved toward the door.

"No," said I, turning to the mysterious scrawl, "I will hound this thing down while the inspiration's on me."

"Inspiration?—Bah!" The door slammed, but I never turned my head.

I had sat thus in dead silence for ten minutes, when suddenly I heard a quick impatient movement at my back, and then the sharp impetuous words—"In God's name! quit biting your nails like that! Don't you know it's an indication of madness!"

I think I need not enter into any explanation as to the reason which, from that moment, determined me upon a course that could afford no further conflict of opinion other than that already going on within my own mind. That of itself furnished all the exasperating controversy that I felt was well for my indulgence. But in one way I was grateful for the pointed suggestion of my friend regarding the questionable status of my mental faculties, for by it I was made most keenly alive to that peculiar sense of duty that made me look upon myself and question every individual act, entirely separated from my own personality; in fact, to look upon myself, as I did, clearly and distinctly defined in the light of a very suspicious and a very dangerous character, whose sole intent and purpose was to play and practise on me all unlooked-for and undreamed-of deceptions, and which, to combat suc-

cessfully, must needs require the most rigid and unwavering strength of reason.

In further justice to my honesty in this resolve, I will say that I began at once the exercise of systematic habits. Although by no means pleasant, I took long rambles in the country; ate regularly of wholesome food, regained my appetite, and retired at night at seasonable hours. I will not say that sleep came sooner to my eyes by reason of the change, but anyway I wooed sleep—let this suffice. I threw smoking aside entirely—not by any means a hard trial for me, although an occasional cigar is a great pleasure; but I threw it aside. Did not study so intensely as had been by wont; read but little, and wrote less—even neglecting my letters. Yet, with all this revolution of reform, I am left to confess that I never for one waking moment forgot the mystic legend, "Ye Scholar," or its equally incomprehensible author; and how could I?

Since the first discovery of the strange insect and its musical proclivities three evenings only have passed that I have not been favored with its most extraordinary performances on the guitar. In this way has its presence been usually made known. And noting carefully, as I have done, the peculiar times and conditions of its coming, together with such other suggestions as the surroundings have afforded me, I have been led to believe that the spider reasoned as a man would reason: In no instance yet has it ever touched the instrument when I sat busy at my desk; and only when my pen was

idle in my hand or I had turned wearily away to pace about the room, has it ever exhibited any inclination whatever to occupy my attention. This curious fact interpreted itself at last in the rather startling proposition that it was simply an indication on the part of the insect that it desired me to favor it with music, since my time was not better occupied.—Virtually this is what it *did* mean; I *know* it! I would know and appreciate now any want the insect might choose to express; only at first I was very dull, as one naturally would be. And I noticed, too, that when I first responded to this summons the spider would leap from the guitar to the wall with every evidence of pleasure, and glide back to its old position near the ceiling, indulging the wildest tokens of glee and approval throughout my performances. And many times I have marched off round and round the room simply thrumming the time, the spider following along the upper margin of the wall with the most fantastic caperings of joy.

Other experiments followed, too numerous and too foolish for recountal here, but each, in its way, sufficient to establish more conclusively in my mind the belief that the hideous little monster was endowed with an intelligence as wise and subtle in its workings as it was within the power of my own to recognize—even greater—for gradually, as we became more accustomed to each other, the ugly insect grew so tame it would come down the wall and dance for me on a level with my face as I sat play-

ing, and even spring off upon the instrument if I held it out. At last I found my mind so baffled and bewildered that more than once the conviction was forced upon me that the spider was *not* a spider, but a— No, I'll not say that—not yet, not yet!

These experiments had progressed for perhaps half a dozen nights, when, as I sat, pen in hand at the desk here one evening, mechanically poring over the still incomprehensible meaning of the scrawl and writing and rewriting the two words over and over again upon an empty page before me, I became suddenly aware of a strange sensation of repose. A great cool quiet fell upon my brain, as when suddenly within some noisy foundry the clanging hammers cease to beat and all the brazen tumult drops like a plummet into silence fathomless. I felt a soothing languor flowing down and over me, and ebbing through and through my very being. It was not drowsiness; my eyelids were not heavy, nor did they droop the shadow of a shade. I saw everything about me as clearly as I do this very moment—only, I did not seem a part of my surroundings. My eyes, although conscious of all objects within range, were fixed upon the scrap of paper headed by the zigag scrawl and with an intensity of gaze that seemed to pierce the paper and to see through and beyond it; and I did not think it strange. I was dimly conscious, too, of being under the control of some influence hitherto undreamed, but I felt no thought of resistance—

rather courted the sensation. All was utter calm with me; and I did not think it strange. I saw my hand held out before me in this same position—the forearm resting on the desk—the same pen grasped lightly in my fingers.

Slowly—slowly—slowly—I saw the spider lowering itself above it, wavering and swaying in the air, until, at last, I saw it reach its dangling legs and clutch and cling to the penholder at the tip, and rest there; and I did not think it strange. But I grew duller then, and very chilly, though I vividly recall seeing the hand moved—not of my own volition—the pen dipped in the ink, and brought directly over the old scrap whereon the scrawl was traced; and I remember, too, that as I watched the motion of my hand, I still saw beyond the surface of the paper, and read the very words my pen traced afterward. I say the words my pen traced—or my hand—either—both—for the act was not my own, I swear! And the spider still sat perched there at his post, rocked lightly with the motion of the pen, with all his arms hugged round him as though chuckling to himself; and I say to you again, and yet again, I did not think it strange.

Not until the page before me had been filled did I regain my natural state of being, nor did it seem that I then would, had not the spider quitted his position and run down the penholder, leaning from it for an instant, touching and pressing my naked hand: then I was conscious of a keen exquisite sting; and with a quick spasmodic motion

I flung the hideous insect from it. As I lifted my white face and starting eyes, I saw the spider wildly clambering toward the ceiling on its invisible thread. Then, with a mingled sense of fear, bewilderment and admiration, as oppressive and strange as indescribable, I turned to the mysterious scrap and read, traced tremblingly, but plainly, in a dainty flowing hand, unlike any I had ever seen before, the lines I now copy from the original script before me, bearing the pedantic title of "Ye Scholar":

"Ho! ho! Ye Scholar recketh not how lean
His lank frame waxeth in ye hectic gloom
That smeareth o'er ye dim walls of his room
His wavering shadow! Shut is he, I ween,
Like as a withered nosegay, in between
Ye musty, mildewed leaves of some volume
Of ancient lore ye moth and he consume
In jointure. Yet a something in his mien
Forbids all mockery, though quaint is he,
And eke fantastical in form and face
As that Old Knight ye Tale of Chivalry
Made mad immortally, yet spared ye grace
Of some rare virtue which we sigh to see,
And pour our laughter out most tenderly."

Over and over I read the strange production to myself; and, as at last I started to my feet repeating it aloud, all suddenly the spider swooped on its flying thread before my upturned face, swung back upon the margin of the wall, and went scampering round and round above me as I read.

I did not sleep two hours of the night, but

mouthed and mouthed that sonnet—even in my scrappy dreams—until when morning strained the sunlight through the slatted window-blinds I turned and dragged myself from the room like an old, old man with childish summer fancies in his head and bleak and barren winter in his bones.

The night following, and the next night, and the next, I did not permit myself to enter my room after dark—not from a sense of fear, but simply because I felt my mind was becoming too entirely engrossed with the contemplation of a theme that, even yet at times, I feared was more chimera than reality.

Throughout the day as usual with me, I worked perhaps three hours at such trivial tasks as required only the lightest mental effort; nor did I allow my mind to wander from the matter-of-fact duties before me to the contemplation of the ever-present topic that so confounded it when studiously dwelt on. Only once in this long abstinence from the fascinating problem did I catch sight of the spider, peering down upon me from behind the shoulder of the little terra-cotta bust of Dickens that sits on a dusty bracket just above my desk. I looked up at the little fellow with a smile, rose to my feet and held out my hand, when, at the motion the insect cowered trembling for an instant, then sprang up the wall beyond my reach. But from that time on I always felt its presence though unseen, intuitively conscious that at all hours my every act was vigilantly scrutinized and guarded by the all-seeing

eye of that spider, and that every motion of my pen was duly noted by it, and accepted as token of the fact that I was busy and must not be disturbed. Indeed, I even allowed my vanity such license that I came to believe that the spider was not only interested in everything I did, but was actually proud of my accomplishments. Certain it is, I argued, that he likes my silence, my music and my voice, and equally apparent from his actions that he likes my society under any and all circumstances. Nor shall it be the promptings of mere curiosity on my part that shall make me endeavor to strengthen and develop this curious bond of fellowship, but my serious and most courteous duty as well.

So I went back to my night labors, greeted the first evening, as I lit my lamp, by another mysterious scrawl, which I readily interpreted in the one word "Love."

I dashed the scrap down in a very spasm of revulsion and loathing. I can not describe nor will I weaken the sense of utter abhorrence that fell upon me by an attempt to set it forth in words; why, I could taste it, and it sickened me soul-deep! I remember catching quick breaths through my clenched and naked teeth; I remember snatching up the pen as a despairing man grasps a dagger; I remember stabbing it in the ink, and drawing it back in defiance; but as my hand once more rested on the desk it was *my* hand no longer.—It was like another man's, and that man my deadly foe. I

looked upon it vengefully, wishing that in my other I but held an ax—an old ax, with a nicked and rusty edge,—that I might hack and haggle the traitor-member sheer off at the numb and pulseless wrist. And then the spider! I tried to shrink back as the hideous insect again dangled before my eyes, but could not move. Once more it clutched the holder of the pen, huddled its quivering limbs together, and squatted in its old position on the tip. And then began the movement of the hand.

This time my eyes were fixed upon the insect. I could not move them from it. I could see nothing else; and but for the undulating motions of the pen I felt that I might note its very breathings—and I *did* see it *smile*. Oh, horrible! Why, I set my teeth together till my inner sense of hearing pinged like a bell, and said, away down among the twanging fibers of my heart, "I will kill you for that smile! I will kill you—kill you!" And when at last the motion of the hand had ceased, and the hideous insect again ran down the penholder, leaning, and pressing into my naked flesh that keen exquisite sting, I snapped the thrall that bound me, flung the spider violently against the desk, stabbed the pen wildly at it with a dozen swift vindictive motions as the abhorrent thing lay for the moment writhing on its back. And I struck it, too, and pinioned it; but as for an instant I turned away from the revolting sight, my pen still quivering above it, sunken eye-deep in the desk, my victim yet escaped me, for, as I turned again, no sign remained to designate

my murderous deed but one poor severed limb, twitching and trembling in ever-lessening throes and convulsions.

I turned my eyes upon the mysterious scrap once more, with the same unaccountable feeling of dread and revulsion that had possesed me as I read the scrawl. Written in the same minute, tremulous but legible hand in which the first was traced, I read:

"O, what strange tragedy is this of mine
That wars within, and will not let me cry?
My soul seems leaking from me sigh by sigh;
And yet I dare not say—nor he divine—
That I, so vile and loathsome in design,
Am brimmed with boiling love; but I must lie
Forever steeped in seething agony!
If all these quivering arms might wreathe and twine,
And soak him up in one warm clasp of bliss—
One long caress, when babbling wild with words
My voice were crushed and mangled with his kiss,—
My soul would whistle sweeter than the birds.—
But now, my dry and husky heart in this
Pent heat of gasping passion can but hiss!"

Be patient! I am hurrying toward the end. I am very lonesome here alone. For three long empty nights have I sat thus, with nothing but the raspings of my pen for company. I can not sleep now; and I would not if I could. My head feels as if I wore a very heavy hat, and I put up my hand at times to see. My head is feverish, that's all. I have been working too late again. Last night I heard Hays come up the steps—my window opens on an alley;

but at night the light shows from the street. Hays has a peculiar walk: I'd know it if I heard it in the grass above my grave. And he came up the stairs last night, and knocked and rattled at the door; but I was very still, and so he went away. Sometimes I think that fellow isn't right exactly in his mind. I never knew what silence was before. It will not even whisper to me now. Sometimes I stop and listen, and then it holds its breath and listens too—but we never hear a thing. The old guitar leans in the corner with its face turned to the wall. I know it's sorry, but it would be such a comfort to me if it would only moan or murmur as it used. I always tune it the first thing when I come in, and lean it back, just as it was when the spider first began to play it; but the spider won't go near it any more. Even the spider has deserted me, and gone away and left me here alone—all alone! One night, late, I heard it coming up the stairs; and it knocked and rattled at the door, and I wouldn't let it in, and so it went away—and do you know that I have often thought that that spider wasn't right—in its mind, you know? Oh, yes! I have often thought so—often! This hat bothers me, but I'll hurry on—I must hurry on.

When I came in to-night—no; *last* night it was—when I came to work last night, there was another of those scrawls the spider had left for me, and it was written in a very trembling hand. The letters were blotted and slurred together so I could hardly make the word out; but I did make it out, and it

was simply the one word, "Death"—just "Death." I didn't like the looks of it, and I tried to make it read something else; but it wouldn't. It was "Death." And so I laid it gently on the desk and walked about the room very softly for a long time. And the night kept on getting stiller, and stiller, and stiller, till it just stopped. But that didn't disturb me; I was not sleepy, anyhow, and so I sat down at the desk, took up my pen, and waited. I had nothing else to do, and the guitar wouldn't play any more, and I was lonesome; so I sat down at the desk, and took up the pen, and waited.

Sometimes I think it's those spells the spider gives me that make my head feel this way. It feels as if I had a heavy hat on; but I haven't any hat on at all, and if I had I wouldn't have it on here in the room. I can't even sit in the cars with a hat on.

And so I waited, and waited; but it seemed as if it wasn't still enough for the spider yet. It was still enough for me; but I got to thinking about why the spider didn't come, and concluded at last that it wasn't still enough yet for the spider. So I waited till it got so still I could see it; and then the spider came sliding along down through it; and when it touched the penholder, and I got a good clear look at it, I flashed dead-numb clean to the marrow.—It was so pale! Did you ever see a spider after it has had a long spell of sickness? That's the way this spider looked. I shuddered as it huddled its trembling legs together and sat down. And then the pen moved off, with that pale, ghastly hag-

gard insect nodding away again as though it still were victor of the field; and as, at last, I found courage to peer closer into its face, I saw that same accursed smile flung back at me. All pity and compassion fled away, and I felt my heart snarl rabidly and champ its bloody jaws with deadly hate. And when the spider hobbled down the penholder and touched my hand again, the only sting I felt upon that hand was the vengeful blow I smote it with the other and I held and ground it there with an exultant cry that rang out upon the silence till the echoes clapped their very hands and shouted with me, "Dead! dead at last! Dead! dead! and I am free!" Oh, how I reveled in my fancied triumph as I danced about the room, crunching my hands together till I thought that I could feel the clammy fragments of the hateful thing gaumed and slimed about between my palms and fingers! And what a fool I was! for when at last I unclasped them and spread them wide apart in utter loathing, they were as free from taint or moisture as they are this very moment; and then it all flashed on me that I was in some horrid dream—some hideous baleful nightmare—some fell delusion of a fevered sleep. But no! I could not force that comfort on myself, for here the lamp sat burning brightly as at this very moment, and I reached and held my finger on the chimney till it burned. I wheeled across the room, opened the door, went to the window and raised it, and felt the chill draft sweeping in upon my fevered face. I took my hat from the sofa and dashed out into

the night. I was not asleep; I had not been asleep; for not until broad daylight did I return, to find the window opened just as I had left it; the lamp still blazing at its fullest glare, and that grim scrawl, "Death," lying still upon the desk, with these lines traced legibly beneath it:

"And did you know our old friend Death is dead?
Ah me! he died last night; my ghost was there,
And all his phantom-friends from everywhere
Were sorrowfully grouped about his bed.
'I die; God help the living now!' he said
With such a ghastly pathos, I declare
The tears oozed from the blind eyes of the air
And spattered on his face in gouts of red.
And then he smiled—the dear old bony smile
That glittered on us in that crazy whim
When first our daring feet leapt the defile
Of life and ran so eagerly to him:
And so he smiled upon us, even while
The kind old sockets grew forever dim."

I am almost through. It is nearly morning as I write. When daylight comes, and this is finished, I can sleep.

That last spider that appeared to me was not the real spider. That last spider was not a spider, and I'll tell you how I know: Four hours ago, as I sat writing here, I dipped and dragged a strange clot from the inkstand with my pen. It is barely dry yet, and it is a drowned spider. It is the real spider —the other spider was its ghost. Listen: I know this is the real spider from the fact that it has one leg missing, and the leg that has been lying on my

desk here, for three days and nights, I find, upon careful examination and adjustment, is the leg that originally supplied this deficiency.

Whatever theory it may please you to advance regarding the mysterious manifestations of the spider while in the flesh will doubtless be as near the correct one as my own. Certainly I shall not attempt to controvert any opinion you may choose to express. I simply reserve the right, in conclusion of my story, to say that I believe this spider met his death by suicide.

DREAMS

"Do I sleep, do I dream,
Do I wonder and doubt—
Are things what they seem
Or is visions about?"

THERE has always been an inclination, or desire, rather, on my part to believe in the mystic —even as far back as stretches the gum-elastic remembrance of my first "taffy-pullin' " given in honor of my fifth birthday; and the ghost-stories, served by way of ghastly dessert, by our hired girl. In fancy I again live over all the scenes of that eventful night:—

The dingy kitchen, with its haunting odors of a thousand feasts and wash-days; the old bench-legged stove, with its happy family of skillets, stew-pans and round-bellied kettles crooning and blubbering about it. And how we children clustered round the genial hearth, with the warm smiles dying from our faces just as the embers dimmed and died out in the open grate, as with bated breath we listened to how some one's grandmother had said that her first man went through a graveyard once, one stormy night, "jest to show the neighbors that he wasn't afeard o' nothin'," and how when he was

just passing the grave of his first wife "something kind o' big and white-like, with great big eyes like fire, raised up from behind the headboard, and kind o' re'ched out for him"; and how he turned and fled, "with that-air white thing after him as tight as it could jump, and a hollerin' 'wough-yough-yough!' till you could hear it furder'n you could a bullgine," and how, at last, just as the brave and daring intruder was clearing two graves and the fence at one despairing leap, the "white thing," had made a grab at him with its iron claws, and had nicked him so close his second wife was occasioned the onerous duty of affixing another patch in his pantaloons. And in conclusion, our hired girl went on to state that this blood-curdling incident had so wrought upon the feelings of "the man that wasn't afeard o' nothin'," and had given him such a distaste for that particular graveyard, that he never visited it again, and even entered a clause in his will to the effect that he would ever remain an unhappy corpse should his remains be interred in the said graveyard.

I forgot my pop-corn that night; I forgot my taffy; I forgot all earthly things; and I tossed about so feverishly in my little bed, and withal so restlessly, that more than once my father's admonition above the foot-board of the big bed, of "Drat you! go to sleep, there!" foreshadowed my impending doom. And once he leaned over and made a vicious snatch at me, and holding me out at arm's length by one

leg, demanded in thunder-tones, "what in the name o' flames and flashes I meant, anyhow!"

I was afraid to stir a muscle from that on, in consequence of which I at length straggled off in fitful dreams—and heavens! what dreams!—A very long and lank, and slim and slender old woman in white knocked at the door of my vision, and I let her in. She patted me on the head—and oh! how cold her hands were! And they were very hard hands, too, and very heavy—and, horror of horrors! —they were not hands—they were claws!—they were iron!—they were like the things I had seen the hardware man yank nails out of a keg with. I quailed and shivered till the long and slim and slender old woman jerked my head up and snarled spitefully, "What's the matter with you, bub," and I said, "Nawthin'!" and she said, "Don't you dare to lie to me!" I moaned.

"Don't you like me?" she asked.

I hesitated.

"And lie if you dare!" she said—"Don't you like me?"

"Oomh-oomh!" said I.

"Why?" said she.

"Cos, you're too long—and slim—an' "—

"Go on!" said she.

"—And tall!" said I.

"Ah, ha!" said she,—"and that's it, hey?"

And then she began to grow shorter and thicker, and fatter and squattier.

"And how do I suit you now?" she wheezed at length, when she had wilted down to about the size of a large loaf of bread.

I shook more violently than ever at the fearful spectacle.

"How do you like me now?" she yelped again, "And don't you lie to me neither, or I'll swaller you whole!"

I writhed and hid my face.

"Do you like me?"

"No-o-oh!" I moaned.

She made another snatch at my hair. I felt her jagged claws sink into my very brain. I struggled and she laughed hideously.

"You don't, hey?"

"Yes, yes, I do. I love you!" said I.

"You lie! You lie!" She shrieked derisively. "You know you lie!" and as I felt the iron talons sinking and gritting in my very brain, with one wild, despairing effort, I awoke.

I saw the fire gleaming in the grate, and by the light it made I dimly saw the outline of the old mantelpiece that straddled it, holding the old clock high upon its shoulders. I was awake then, and the little squatty woman with her iron talons was a dream! I felt an oily gladness stealing over me, and yet I shuddered to be all alone.

If only some one were awake, I thought, whose blessed company would drown all recollections of that fearful dream; but I dared not stir or make a noise. I could only hear the ticking of the clock,

and my father's sullen snore. I tried to compose my thoughts to pleasant themes, but that telescopic old woman in white would rise up and mock my vain appeals, until in fancy I again saw her altitudinous proportions dwindling into that repulsive and revengeful figure with the iron claws, and I grew restless and attempted to sit up. Heavens! something yet held me by the hair. The chill sweat that betokens speedy dissolution gathered on by brow. I made another effort and arose, that deadly clutch yet fastened in my hair. Could it be possible! The short, white woman still held me in her vengeful grasp! I could see her white dress showing from behind either of my ears. She still clung to me, and with one wild, unearthly cry of "Pap!" I started round the room.

I remember nothing further, until as the glowing morn sifted through the maple at the window, powdering with gold the drear old room, and baptizing with its radiance the anxious group of old home-faces leaning o'er my bed, I heard my father's voice once more rasping on my senses—"Now get the booby up, and wash that infernal wax out of his hair!"

THE OBJECT LESSON

BARELY a year ago I attended the Friday afternoon exercises of a country school. My mission there, as I remember, was to refresh my mind with such material as might be gathered, for a "valedictory," which, I regret to say, was to be handed down to posterity under another signature than my own.

There was present, among a host of visitors, a pale young man of perhaps thirty years, with a tall head and bulging brow and a highly-intellectual pair of eyes and spectacles. He wore his hair without roach or "part" and the smile he beamed about him was "a joy forever." He was an educator—from the East, I think I heard it rumored—anyway he was introduced to the school at last, and he bowed, and smiled, and beamed upon us all, and entertained us after the most delightfully edifying manner imaginable. And although I may fail to reproduce the exact substance of his remarks upon that highly important occasion, I think I can at least present his theme in all its coherency of detail. Addressing more particularly the primary department of the school, he said:—

"As the little exercise I am about to introduce is

of recent origin, and the bright, intelligent faces of the pupils before me seem rife with eager and expectant interest, it will be well for me, perhaps, to offer by way of preparatory preface, a few terse words of explanation.

"The Object-Lesson is designed to fill a long-felt want, and is destined, as I think, to revolutionize, in a great degree, the educational systems of our land.—In my belief, the Object-Lesson will supply a want which I may safely say has heretofore left the most egregious and palpable traces of mental confusion and intellectual inadequacies stamped, as it were, upon the gleaming reasons of the most learned—the highest cultured, and the most eminently gifted and promising of our professors and scientists both at home and abroad.

"Now this deficiency—if it may be so termed—plainly has a beginning; and probing deeply with the bright, clean scalpel of experience we discover that—"As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined." To remedy, then, a deeply-seated error which for so long has rankled at the very root of educational progress throughout the land, many plausible, and we must admit, many helpful theories have been introduced to allay the painful errors resulting from the discrepancy of which we speak: but until now, nothing that seemed wholly to eradicate the defect has been discovered, and that, too, strange as it may seem, is, at last, found emanating, like the mighty river, from the simplest source, but broadening and gathering in force and power as it flows along, until,

at last, its grand and mighty current sweeps on in majesty to the vast illimitable ocean of—of—of—Success! Ahem!

"And, now, little boys and girls, that we have had by implication, a clear and comprehensive explanation of the Object-Lesson and its mission, I trust you will give me your undivided attention while I endeavor—in my humble way—to direct your newly acquired knowledge through the proper channel. For instance:—

"This little object I hold in my hand—who will designate it by its proper name? Come, now, let us see who will be the first to answer. 'A peanut,' says the little boy here at my right. Very good—very good! I hold, then, in my hand, a peanut. And now who will tell me, what is the peanut? A very simple question—who will answer? 'Something good to eat,' says the little girl. Yes, 'something good to eat,' but would it not be better to say simply that the peanut is an edible? I think so, yes. The peanut, then, is—an edible—now, all together, an edible!

"To what kingdom does the peanut belong? The animal, vegetable or mineral kingdom? A very easy question. Come, let us have prompt answers. 'The animal kingdom,' does the little boy say? Oh, no! The peanut does not belong to the animal kingdom! Surely the little boy must be thinking of a larger object than the peanut—the elephant, perhaps. To what kingdom, then, does the peanut belong? The v-v-veg—'The vegetable kingdom,'

says the bright-faced little girl on the back seat. Ah! that is better. We find then that the peanut belongs to the—what kingdom? The 'vegetable kingdom.' Very good, very good!

"And now who will tell us of what the peanut is composed. Let us have quick responses now. Time is fleeting! Of what is the peanut composed? 'The hull and the goody,' some one answers. Yes, 'the hull and the goody' in vulgar parlance, but how much better it would be to say simply, the shell and the kernel. Would not that sound better? Yes, I thought you would agree with me there!

"And now who will tell me the color of the peanut! And be careful now! for I shouldn't like to hear you make the very stupid blunder I once heard a little boy make in reply to the same question. Would you like to hear what color the stupid little boy said the peanut was? You would, eh? Well, now, how many of you would like to hear what color the stupid little boy said the peanut was? Come now, let's have an expression. All who would like to hear what color the stupid little boy said the peanut was, may hold up their right hands. Very good, very good—there, that will do.

"Well, it was during a professional visit I was once called upon to make to a neighboring city, where I was invited to address the children of a free school—Hands down, now, little boy—founded for the exclusive benefit of the little newsboys and bootblacks, who, it seems, had not the means to defray the expenses of the commonest educational

accessories, and during an object lesson identical with the one before us now—for it is a favorite one of mine—I propounded the question, what is the color of the peanut? Many answers were given in response, but none as sufficiently succinct and apropos as I deemed the facts demanded; and so at last I personally addressed a ragged, but, as I then thought, a bright-eyed little fellow, when judge of my surprise, in reply to my question, what is the color of a peanut, the little fellow, without the slightest gleam of intelligence lighting up his face, answered, that 'if not scorched by roasting, the peanut was a blond.' Why, I was almost tempted to join in the general merriment his inapposite reply elicited. But I occupy your attention with trivial things; and as I notice the time allotted me has slipped away, we will drop the peanut for the present. Trusting the few facts gleaned from a topic so homely and unpromising will sink deep in your minds, in time to bloom and blossom in the fields of future usefulness—I—I——I thank you."

EZ

"ORTENTER be a-fishin' on Sunday? That's all you know about it. Je-ru-sa-lem! what a bite! S'posin' a feller hain't got no other day to fish—S'posin' a feller sells papers ev'ry day and Sunday mornin', too, what then? 'Sides, the house ain't big enough to hold the whole fam'ly to-day."

The boy was not more than twelve years old. He was seated on the river bank under a clump of sycamores about two hundred yards from the National Road bridge. Coatless, his one suspender ran over his shoulder, while his shirt filled and bagged with the soft wind that blew up from the southwest. The smell of violets was in the breeze, but the boy didn't mind that—he had a nibble. He was barefooted—one foot. A crutch lay beside him, and the lower part of the left leg of the tow-linen trousers was empty. "Chawed off by the kyars," he said, sententiously, discouraging further questioning on the subject, spitting on a wriggling angleworm as he baited his hook. "Makes 'em bite better"—not the worms, evidently, but the fish. "Got any terbacker?" he inquired a minute later. "Thank 'ee. Where do I live?" he continued, growing gracious under the softening influence of the weed. "Over

there in that white house. Not the one you're lookin' at—furder to the right—I live there.

"I wonder" (musingly) "how the jamboree is a-comin' on by this time? The old-un—I mean daddy, the old man—has been cuttin' up rough and mother has had to reel him in. She's a da-i-sy," he ran on, his voice changing into song in which he took cognizance of the fact that she was also "a darling" and "a dumpling." "Don't you ever go for to think that she knows I'm a-fishin'—for she don't. My mother's not that sort, not by a jay-you-gee, jugful. My mother is a lady and a Methodist, an' a mighty nice mess she made of it when she married the old man. Not that he's always been tuffy like he is now, fur he ain't no slouch when he keeps the budge—liquor, you know—out of himself. This last break of his'n was all along er gittin' into politics. A feller come along an' as't him to go to the primary. He went. Think from the time he got in that night that somebody set 'em up pretty lively.

"That's two weeks ago an' he's been a-keepin' it up ever since. My mother told Dutchy, the s'loon-keeper, not to sell the old man any more budge—in course she didn't say budge, she said 'toxicatin' drinks—an' he lafft at her. That's where he got left. My mother's folks is gritty; her brother, my Uncle Dave, was shot carryin' the colors over Mission Ridge. Yesterday the old man—Is he a railroad man? No, he's a cooper, an' you'd orter see what a head he's got on to his kag to-day. Well,

daddy went round to Dutchy's again an' got fuller'n a goose. When he gets full he gits wealthy an' 'll squander his last nick. I went to Dutchy's to try to run the old man into the roundhouse—I mean take him home—where he could have his brass rubbed off and give his boiler a chance to cool, for the old machine did look awful hard. He was goin' about sixty mile an hour an' I looked to see a cylinder head fly out. That's what I told Jake, over to the I. B. & W. yards. Jake an' me's pards. I told daddy he must go home; that he wasn't doin' the fair thing by mother, when all of a suddent he give me one right here over my left ear. You can feel —it's about as big as a' Easter egg. Ale bottle, I guess it was. I sort o' took a tumble to myself then, and didn't know for a minute or two whether I was still on the main track or off on a siding.

"When I come to, things was lively, I tell you. My mother is a little woman—don't weigh over ninety pounds—but if you'd 'a' seen her yesterday, you'd 'a' thought she weighed a ton. Ever been into Dutchy's? Know what a nice spread of glassware he has behind his bar? Know that mirror that he smears with soap pictures, birds an' things? All gone. They tried to hold mother, half a dozen of 'em did, but they couldn't do it. The old man had sneaked off somewhere—first time she'd ever follered him—an' he felt ornery. She told Dutchy that she'd begged him time 'n' again not to sell liquor to father, an' then she went for the glassware. Talk about Captain Bogardus bu'stin' glass balls!

Mother didn't leave nothin'. She had my baseball bat, and she did some of the heaviest battin' ever you see. I don't think she left a piece of that mirror big enough to scrape an ax-handle. Ought to seen Dutchy! It was better'n a cir-cu-ous! 'Somebody hold 'er,' sez he—ha, ha! Hold her? Nobody dared lay a finger on her. Orter see the scars on that baseball club. It's the boss club, you betcher boots.

"When it was all over mother just dropped as limp as a rag, and some of the neighbor women come and took her home. She was flighty an' out of her head like, and 'stericky for three or four hours. That sort o' sobered the old man, for she was awful bad, and he was afraid he was goin' to lose her. 'How could he ever raise Ez?' said the neighbors. Ez, that's me, Ezra. Mother got the name out of the Bible. Just as if I needed any raisin', for I'm a rooster as can take care of myself. But it would 'a' bu'sted me to lose mother. An' what would become of daddy? How could I ever raise him? Great Jemima! did you see that bite? I don't think Dutchy'll sell him any more budge very soon, do you? Mother an' the old man, they're a-makin' it up to-day. I think this time he'll swear off for keeps, an' I don't want to stand 'round with this goose-egg on my head to make mother mad every time she looks at me an' thinks about it. I want to give the old man a chance."

THE CHAMPION CHECKER-PLAYER OF AMERIKY

OF course as fur as Checker-playin' 's concerned, you can't jest adzactly claim 'at lots makes fortunes and lots gits bu'sted at it—but still, it's on'y simple jestice to acknowledge 'at there're absolute p'ints in the game 'at takes scientific principles to figger out, and a mighty level-headed feller to *dim*onstrate, don't you understand!

Checkers is a' *old* enough game, ef age is any rickommendation; and it's a' evident fact, too, 'at "the tooth of time," as the feller says, which fer the last six thousand years has gained some reputation fer a-eatin' up things in giner'l, don't 'pear to 'a' gnawed much of a hole in Checkers—jedgin' from the checker-board of to-day and the ones 'at they're uccasionally shovelin' out at *Pom*p'y-*i*, ei whatever its name is. Turned up a checker-board there not long ago, I wuz readin' 'bout, 'at still had the spots on—as plain and fresh as the modern white-pine board o' our'n, squared off with pencil-marks and pokeberry-juice. These is facts 'at history herself has dug out, and of course it ain't fer me ner you to turn our nose up at Checkers,

whuther we ever tamper with the fool-game er not. Fur's that's concerned, I don't p'tend to be no checker-player *myse'f,*—but I knowed a feller onc't 'at *could* play, and sort o' made a business of it; and *that* man, in my opinion, wuz a geenyus! Name wuz Wesley Cotterl—John Wesley Cotterl—just plain Wes, as us fellers round the shoe-shop ust to call him; ust to allus make the shoe-shop his headquarters-like; and, rain er shine, wet er dry, you'd allus find *Wes* on hands, ready to banter some feller fer a game, er jest a-settin' humped up there over the checker-board all alone, a-cipherin' out some new move er 'nuther, and whistlin' low and solem' to hisse'f-like and a-payin' no attention to nobody.

And *I'll* tell *you,* Wes Cotterl wuz no man's fool, as sly as you keep it! He wuz a deep thinker, Wes wuz; and ef he'd 'a' jest turned that mind o' his loose on *preachin',* fer instunce, and the 'terpertation o' the Bible, don't you know, Wes 'ud 'a' worked p'ints out o' there 'at no livin' expounderers ever got in gunshot of!

But Wes he didn't 'pear to be cut out fer nothin' much but jest Checker-playin'. Oh, of course, he *could* knock around his own wood-pile some, and garden a little, more er less; and the neighbers ust to find Wes purty handy 'bout trimmin' fruit-trees, you understand, and workin' in among the worms and cattapillers in the vines and shrubbery, and the like. And handlin' bees!—They wuzn't no man under the heavens 'at knowed more 'bout handlin'

bees 'n Wes Cotterl!—"Settlin'" the blame' things when they wuz a-swarmin'; and a-robbin' hives, and all sich fool-resks. W'y, I've saw Wes Cotterl, 'fore now, when a swarm of bees 'ud settle in a' orchard, —like they will sometimes, you know,—I've saw Wes Cotterl jest roll up his shirt-sleeves and bend down a' apple tree limb 'at wuz jest kivvered with the pesky things, and scrape 'em back into the hive with his naked hands, by the quart and gallon, and never git a scratch! You couldn't *hire* a bee to sting Wes Cotterl! But *lazy?*—I think that man had railly ort to 'a' been a' Injun! He wuz the fust and on'y man 'at ever I laid eyes on 'at wuz too lazy to drap a checker-man to p'int out the right road fer a feller 'at ast him onc't the way to Burke's Mill; and Wes 'ithout ever a-liftin' eye er finger, jest sort o' crooked out that mouth o' his'n in the direction the feller wanted, and says: *"H-yonder!"* and went on with his whistlin'. But all this hain't Checkers, and that's what I started out to tell ye.

Wes had a way o' jest natchurally a-cleanin' out anybody and ever'body 'at 'ud he'p hold up a checker-board! Wes wuzn't what you'd call a *lively* player at all, ner a competiter 'at talked much 'crost the board er made much furse over a game whilse he *wuz* a-playin'. He had his faults, o' course, and *would* take back moves 'casion'ly, er inch up on you ef you didn't watch him, mebby. But, *as a rule,* Wes had the insight to grasp the idy of whoever wuz a-playin' ag'in' him, and *his* style o' game, you understand,

and wuz on the lookout continual'; and under sich circumstances *could* play as *honest* a game o' Checkers as the babe unborn.

One thing in *Wes's* favor allus wuz the feller's temper.—Nothin' 'peared to aggervate Wes, and nothin' on earth could break his slow and lazy way o' takin' his own time fer ever'thing. You jest *couldn't crowd Wes* er git him rattled anyway.—Jest 'peared to have one fixed principle, and that wuz to take plenty o' time, and never make no move 'ithout a-cipherin' ahead on the prob'ble consequences, don't you understand! "Be shore you're right," Wes 'ud say, a-lettin' up fer a second on that low and sorry-like little wind-through-the-keyhole whistle o' his, and a-nosin' out a place whur he could swap one man fer two.—"Be shore you're right"—and somep'n' after this style wuz Wes's way: "Be shore you're right"—(whistling a long, lonesome bar of "Barbara Allen")—"and then"—(another long, retarded bar)—"go ahead!"—and by the time the feller 'ud git through with his whistlin', and a-stoppin' and a-startin' in ag'in, he'd be about three men ahead to your one. And then he'd jest go on with his whistlin' 'sef nothin' had happened, and mebby you a-jest a-rearin' and a-callin' him all the mean, outlandish, ornry names 'at you could lay tongue to.

But Wes's good nature, I reckon, wuz the thing 'at he'ped him out as much as any other p'ints the feller had. And *Wes' 'ud allus win, in the long run!*—I don't keer *who* played ag'inst him! It wuz on'y

a question o' time with Wes o' waxin' it to the best of 'em. Lots o' players has *tackled* Wes, and right at the *start* 'ud mebby give him trouble,—but in the *long run,* now mind ye—*in the long run,* no mortal man, I reckon, had any business o' rubbin' knees with Wes Cotterl under no airthly checker-board in all this vale o' tears!

I mind onc't th' come along a high-toned feller from in around In'i'nop'lus som'er's.—Wuz a *lawyer,* er some *p'fessional* kind o' man. Had a big yaller, luther-kivvered book under his arm, and a bunch o' these-'ere big en*vel*op's and a lot o' suppeenies stickin' out o' his breast-pocket. Mighty slick-lookin' feller he wuz; wore a stove-pipe hat, sort o' set 'way back on his head—so's to show off his Giner'l Jackson forr'ed, don't you know! Well-sir, this feller struck the place, on some business er other, and then missed the hack 'at *ort* to 'a' tuk him out o' here sooner'n it *did* take him out!—And whilse he wuz a-loafin' round, sort o' lonesome—like a feller allus *is* in a strange place, you know—he kind o' drapped in on our crowd at the shoe-shop, ostenchably to git a boot-strop stitched on, but *I* knowed, the minute he set foot in the door, 'at *that* feller wanted *comp'ny* wuss'n *cobblin'*.

Well, as good luck would have it, there set Wes, as usual, with the checker-board in his lap, a-playin' all by hisse'f, and a-whistlin' so low and solem'-like and sad it railly made the crowd seem like a *religious* getherun' o' some kind er other, we wuz all so quiet and still-like, as the man come in.

Well, the stranger stated his business, set down, tuk off his boot, and set there nussin' his foot and talkin' weather fer ten minutes, I reckon, 'fore he ever 'peared to notice Wes at all. We wuz all back-'ard, anyhow, 'bout talkin' much; besides, we knowed, long afore he come in, all about how hot the weather wuz, and the pore chance there wuz o' rain, and all that; and so the subject had purty well died out, when jest then the feller's eyes struck Wes and the checker-board,—and I'll never fergit the warm, salvation smile 'at flashed over him at the promisin' discovery. *"What!"* says he, a-grinnin' like a' angel and a-edgin' his cheer to'rds Wes, "have we a checker-board and checkers here?"

"We hev," says I, knowin' 'at Wes wouldn't let go o' that whistle long enough to answer—more'n to mebby nod his head.

"And who is your best player?" says the feller, kind o' pitiful-like, with another inquirin' look at Wes.

"Him," says I, a-pokin' Wes with a peg-float. But Wes on'y spit kind o' absent-like, and went on with his whistlin'.

"Much of a player, is he?" says the feller, with a sort o' doubtful smile at Wes ag'in.

"Plays a purty good hick'ry," says I, a-pokin' Wes ag'in. "Wes," says I, "here's a gentleman 'at 'ud mebby like to take a hand with you there, and give you a few idies," says I.

"Yes," says the stranger, eager-like, a-settin' his plug-hat keerful up in the empty shelvin', and a-rub-

bin' his hands and smilin' as confident-like as old Hoyle hisse'f,—"Yes, indeed, I'd be glad to give the gentleman" (meanin' Wes) "a' idy er two about Checkers—ef *he'd* jest as lief,—'cause I reckon ef there're any one thing 'at I *do* know more about 'an another, it's Checkers," says he; "and there're no game 'at delights me more—*pervidin'*, o' course, I find a competiter 'at kin make it anyways in-te*rest*in'."

"Got much of a rickord on Checkers?" says I.

"Well," says the feller, "I don't like to brag, but I've never *be'n* beat—in any *legitimut* contest," says he, "and I've played more'n one o' *them*," he says, "here and there round the country. Of course, *your friend* here," he went on, smilin' sociable at Wes, "*he'll* take it all in good part ef I should happen to lead him a little—jest as *I'd* do," he says, "ef it wuz possible fer him to lead *me*."

"*Wes*," says I, "*has* warmed the wax in the yeers of some mighty good checker-players," says I, as he squared the board around, still a-whistlin' to hisse'f-like, as the stranger tuk his place, a-smilin'-like and roachin' back his hair.

"Move," says Wes.

"No," says the feller, with a polite flourish of his hand; "the first move shall be your'n." And, by jucks! fer all he wouldn't take even the advantage of a starter, he flaxed it to Wes the fust game in less'n fifteen minutes.

"Right shore you've given me your best player?" he says, smilin' round at the crowd, as Wes set

squarin' the board fer another game and whistlin' as onconcerned-like as ef nothin' had happened more'n ordinary.

"'S your move," says Wes, a-squintin' out into the game 'bout forty foot from shore, and a-whistlin' purt' nigh in a whisper.

Well-sir, it 'peared-like the feller railly didn't *try* to play; and you could see, too, 'at Wes knowed he'd about met his match, and played accordin'. He didn't make no move at all 'at he didn't give keerful thought to; whilse the feller—! Well, as I wuz sayin', it jest 'peared-like *Checkers* wuz *child's-play* fer him! Putt in most o' the time 'long through the game a-sayin' things calkilated to kind o' bore a' ordinary man. But Wes helt hisse'f purty level, and didn't show no signs, and kep' up his *whistlin'*, mighty well—considerin'.

"Reckon you play the *fiddle,* too, as well as *Checkers?*" says the feller, laughin', as Wes come a-whistlin' out of the little end of the second game and went on a-fixin' fer the next round.

"'S my move!" says Wes, 'thout seemin' to notice the feller's tantalizin' words whatsomever.

"'Ll! *this time,*" thinks I, "Mr. Smarty from the *me*trolopin deestricts, *you're* liable to git *waxed—shore!*" But the *feller* didn't 'pear to think so at all, and played right ahead as glib-like and keerless as ever—'casion'ly a-throwin' in them sircastic remarks o' his'n,—'bout bein' "slow and shore" 'bout things in gineral—"Liked to *see* that," he said:—"Liked to see fellers do things with plenty o' *delib-*

eration, and even ef a feller *wuzn't* much of a checker-player, liked to see him *die* slow *anyhow!*—and then 'tend his own funeral," he says,—"and march in the p'session—to his own *music,*" says he. —And jest then his remarks wuz brung to a close by Wes a-jumpin' two men, and a-lightin' square in the king-row. . . . "Crown that," says Wes, a-droppin' back into his old tune. And fer the rest o' *that* game Wes helt the feller purty level, but had to finally knock under—but by jest the clos'test kind o' shave o' winnin'.

"They ain't much use," says the feller, "o' keepin' *this* thing up—'less I could manage *some* way er other, to git beat *onc't 'n a while!*"

"Move," says Wes, a-drappin' back into the same old whistle and a-*settlin'* there.

" 'Music has charms,' as the Good Book tells us," says the feller, kind o' nervous-like, and a-roachin' his hair back as ef some sort o' p'tracted headache wuz a-settin' in.

"Never wuz 'skunked,' wuz ye?" says Wes, kind o' suddent-like, with a fur-off look in them big white eyes o' his—and then a-whistlin' right on, 'sef he hadn't said *nothin'.*

"Not much!" says the feller, sort o' s'prised-like, as ef such a' idy as that had never struck him afore. —"Never was 'skunked' *myse'f;* but I've saw fellers in my time 'at *wuz!*" says he.

But from that time on I noticed the feller 'peared to play more keerful, and railly la'nched into the game with somepin' like inter'st. Wes, he seemed to

be jest a-limberin'-up-like; and-sir, blame me! ef he didn't walk the feller's log fer him *that* time, 'thout no 'pearent trouble at all!

"And *now,*" says Wes, all quiet-like, a-squarin' the board fer another 'n',—"we're kind o' gittin' at things *right.* Move." And away went that little unconcerned whistle o' his ag'in, and *Mr. Cityman* jest gittin' white and sweaty too—he wuz so nervous. Ner he didn't 'pear to find much to laugh at in the *next* game—ner the next *two* games nuther! Things wuz a-gettin' mighty inter*est*in' 'bout them times, and I guess the feller wuz ser'ous-like a-wakin' up to the solem' fact 'at it tuk 'bout all *his* spare time to keep up his end o' the row, and even that state o' 'pore satisfaction wuz a-creepin' furder and furder away from him ever' new turn he undertook. Whilse *Wes* jest 'peared to git more deliber't' and certain ever' game; and that unendin' se'f-satisfied and comfortin' little whistle o' his never drapped a stitch, but toed out ever' game alike,—to'rds the *last,* and, fer the *most* part, disaster's to the feller 'at had started in with sich confi*dence* and actchul promise, don't you know.

Well-sir, the feller stuck the whole *forenoon* out, and then the *afternoon;* and then knuckled down to it 'way into the night—yes, and plum *midnight!*—And he buckled into the thing bright and airly *next morning!* And-sir, fer *two long days* and nights, a-hardly a-stoppin' long enough to *eat,* the feller stuck it out,—and Wes a-jest a-warpin' it to him hand-over-fist, and leavin' him furder behind, ever'

game!—till finally, to'rds the last, the feller got so blame-don worked up and excited-like, he jest 'peared actchully purt' nigh plum crazy and histur-ical as a woman!

It wuz a-gittin' late into the shank of the second day, and the boys hed jest lit a candle fer 'em to finish out one of the clos'test games the feller'd played Wes fer some time. But Wes wuz jest as cool and ca'm as ever, and still a-whistlin' consolin' to hisse'f-like, whilse the feller jest 'peared wore out and ready to drap right in his tracks any minute.

"Durn you!" he snarled out at Wes, "hain't you never goern to move?" And there set Wes, a-bal-ancin' a checker-man above the board, a-studyin' whur to set it, and a-fillin' in the time with that-air whistle.

"Flames and flashes!" says the feller ag'in, "will you *ever* stop that death-seducin' tune o' your'n long enough to move?"—And as Wes deliber't'ly set his man down whur the feller see he'd haf to jump it and lose two men and a king, Wes wuz a-singin', low and sad-like, as ef all to hisse'f:

> *"O we'll move that man, and leave him there.—*
> *Fer the love of B-a-r-b—bry Al-len!"*

Well-sir! the feller jest jumped to his feet, upset the board, and tore out o' the shop stark-starin' crazy—blame ef he wuzn't!—'cause some of us putt out after him and overtook him 'way beyent the 'pike-bridge, and hollered to him;—and he shuk his fist at us and hollered back and says, says he:

"Ef you fellers over here," says he, "'ll agree to *muzzle* that durn checker-player o' your'n, I'll bet fifteen hundred dollars to fifteen cents 'at I kin beat him 'leven games out of ever' dozent!—But there're *no money,*" he says, "'at kin hire me to play him ag'in, on this aboundin' airth, on'y on them conditions—'cause that durn, eternal, infernal, dad-blasted whistle o' his 'ud beat the oldest man in Ameriky!"

THE JUDKINS PAPERS

FATHER AND SON

MR. JUDKINS' boy came home yesterday with a bottle of bugs in his pocket, and as the quiet little fellow sat on the back porch in his favorite position, his legs elbowed and flattened out beneath him like a letter "W," his genial and eccentric father came suddenly upon him.

"And what's the blame' boy up to now?" said Mr. Judkins, in an assumed tone of querulous displeasure, as he bent over the boy from behind and gently tweaked his ear.

"Oh, here, mister!" said the boy, without looking up; "you thist let up on that, will you!"

"What you got there, I tell you!" continued the smiling Mr. Judkins, in a still gruffer tone, relinquishing the boy's ear and gazing down upon the fluffy towhead with more than ordinary admiration. "What you got there?"

"Bugs," said the boy—"you know!"

"Dead, are they?" said Mr. Judkins.

"Some of 'em's dead," said the boy, carefully running a needle through the back of a large bumblebee. "All these uns is, you can bet! You don't

think a feller 'ud try to string a live bumblebee, I reckon?"

"Well, no, 'Squire," said Mr. Judkins, airily, addressing the boy by one of the dozen nicknames he had given him; "not a live bumblebee—a real stem-winder, of course not. But what in the name o' limpin' Lazarus are you stringin' 'em fer?"

"Got a live snake-feeder," said the boy, ignoring the parental inquiry. "See him down there in the bottom, 'ith all th'other uns on top of him. Thist watch him now, an' you kin see him pant. I kin. Yes, an' I got a beetle 'at's purt' nigh alive, too—on'y he can't pull in his other wings. See 'em?" continued the boy, with growing enthusiasm, twirling the big-mouthed bottle like a kaleidoscope. "Hate beetles! 'cause they allus act so big, an' make s'much fuss about theirselves, an' don't know nothin' neither! Bet ef I had as many wings as a beetle I wouldn't let no boy my size knock the stuffin' out o' me with no bunch o' weeds, like I done him!"

"Howd'ye know you wouldn't?" said Mr. Judkins, austerely, biting his nails and winking archly to himself.

"W'y, I know I wouldn't," said the boy, " 'cause I'd keep up in the air where I could fly, and wouldn't come low down at all—bumpin' around 'mongst them bushes, an' buzzin' against things, and buttin' my brains out a-tryin' to git thrue fence cracks."

" 'Spect you'd ruther be a snake-feeder, wouldn't you, Bud?" said Mr. Judkins suggestively. "Snake-

feeders has got about enough wings to suit you, ef you want more'n one pair, and every day's a picnic with a snake-feeder, you know. Nothin' to do but jes' loaf up and down the crick, and roost on reeds and cat-tails, er fool around a feller's fish-line and light on the cork and bob up and down with it till she goes clean under, don't you know?"

"Don't want to be no snake-feeder, neither," said the boy, "'cause they gits gobbled up, first thing they know, by these 'ere big green bullfrogs ut they can't ever tell from the skum till they've lit right in their mouth—and then they're goners! No, sir;" continued the boy, drawing an extra quinine bottle from another pocket, and holding it up admiringly before his father's eyes: "There's the feller in there 'at I'd ruther be than have a pony!"

"W'y, it's a nasty p'izen spider!" exclaimed Mr. Judkins, pushing back the bottle with affected abhorrence, "and he's alive, too!"

"You bet he's alive!" said the boy, "and you kin bet he'll never come to no harm while I own him!" and as the little fellow spoke his face glowed with positive affection, and the twinkle of his eyes, as he continued, seemed wonderfully like his father's own. "Tell you, I like spiders! Spiders is awful fat—all but their head—and that's level, you kin bet! Flies hain't got no business with a spider. Ef a spider ever reaches fer a fly, he's his meat! The spider, he likes to loaf an' lay around in the shade an' wait fer flies an' bugs an' things to come a-fool-

in' round his place. He lays back in the hole in the corner of his web, an' waits till somepin' lights on it an' nen when he hears 'em buzzin', he thist crawls out an' fixes 'em so's they can't buzz, an' he's got the truck to do it with! I bet ef you'd unwind all the web-stuff out of thist one little spider not bigger'n a pill, it 'ud be long enough fer a kite-string! Onc't they was one in our wood-house, an' a tater-bug got stuck in his web, and the spider worked purt' nigh two days 'fore he got him so's he couldn't move. Nen he couldn't eat him neither—'cause they's shells on 'em, you know, an' the spider didn't know how to hull him. Ever' time I'd go there the spider, he'd be a-wrappin' more stuff around th' ole bug, an' stoopin' down like he was a-whisperin' to him. An' one day I went in again, an' he was a-hangin', alas, and cold in death! An' I poked him with a splinter and his web broked off—'spect he'd used it all up on the wicked bug—and it killed him; an' I buried him in a' ink bottle, an' mashed the old bug 'ith a chip!"

"Yes," said Judkins, in a horrified tone, turning away to conceal the real zest and enjoyment his face must have betrayed; "yes, and some day you'll come home p'izened, er somepin'! And I want to say right here, my young man, ef ever you do, and it don't kill you, I'll lint you within an inch of your life!" And as the eccentric Mr. Judkins whirled around the corner of the porch he heard the boy murmur in his low, absent-minded way, "Yes, you will!"

MR. JUDKINS' REMARKS

Judkins stopped us in front of the post-office yesterday to say that that boy of his was "the blamedest boy outside o' the annals o' history!" "Talk about this boy-naturalist out here at Indianapolis," says Judkins,—"why, he ain't nowhere to my boy! The little cuss don't do nothin' either only set around and look sleepy, and dern him, he gits off more dry things than you could print in your paper. Of late he's been a-displayin' a sort o' weakness for Nature, don't you know; and he's allus got a bottle o' bugs in his pocket. He come home yesterday evenin' with a blame' mud-turtle as big as an unabridged dictionary, and turned him over in the back yard and commenced biffin' away at him with a hammer and a cold-chisel. 'W'y, you're a-killin' the turtle,' says I. 'Kill nothin'!' says he, 'I'm thist a-takin' the lid off so's I can see his clock works.' Hoomh!" says Judkins: "He's a good one!—only," he added, "I wouldn't have the *boy* think so for the world!"

JUDKINS' BOY ON THE MUD-TURTLE

The mud-turtle is not a beast of pray, but he dearly loves catfish bait. If a mud-turtle gits your big toe in his mouth he will hang on till it thunders. Then he will spit it out like he was disgusted. The mud-turtle can swim and keep his chin out of water ef he wants to, but he don't care ef he does sink.

The turtle can stay under water until his next birthday, and never crack a smile. He can breathe like a grown person, but he don't haf to, only when he is on dry land, and then I guess he jist does it to be soshibul. Always when you see bubbles a-comin' up in the swimmin' hole, you can bet your galluses they's a mud-turtle a-layin' down there, studyin' up some cheap way to get his dinner. Mud-turtles never dies, only when they make soup out of 'em. They is seven kinds of meat in the turtle, but I'd ruther eat jist plain burnt liver.

ON FROGS

Frogs is the people's friend, but they can't fly. Onc't they was tadpoles about as big as lickerish drops, and after a while legs growed on 'em. Oh, let us love the frog—he looks so sorry. Frogs can swim better'n boys, and they don't haf to hold their nose when they dive, neither. Onc't I had a pet frog; and the cars run over him. It jist squashed him. Bet he never knowed what hurt him. Onc't they was a rich lady swallered one—when he was little, you know; and he growed up in her, and it didn't kill him at all. And you could hear him holler in her bosom. It was a tree-toad; and so every time he'd go p-r-r-r-r- w'y, then the grand lady she'd know it was going to rain, and make her little boy run out and put the tub under the spout. Wasn't that a b'utiful frog?

ON PIRUTS

Piruts is reckless to a fault. They ain't afeard of nobody ner nothin'. Ef ever you insult a pirut onc't, he'll follow you to the grave but what he will revenge his wrongs. Piruts all look like pictures of "Buffalo Bill"—only they don't shave off the whiskers that sticks out over the collar of their low-necked shirt. Every day is a picknick for the piruts of the high seas. They eat gunpowder and drink blood to make 'em savage, and then they kill people all day, and set up all night and tell ghost stories and sing songs such as mortal ear would quail to listen to. Piruts never comes on shore only when they run out of tobacker; and then it's a cold day if they don't land at midnight, and disguize theirselves and slip up in town like a sleuth houn', so's the Grand Jury can't get on to 'em. They don't care fer the police any more than us people who dwells right in their midst. Piruts makes big wages and spends it like a king. "Come easy, go easy," is the fatal watchword of them whose deeds is Deth. Onc't they was a pirut turned out of the house and home by his cruel parents when he was but a kid, and so he always went by that name. He was thrust adrift without a nickel, and sailed fer distant shores to hide his shame fer those he loved. In the dead of night he stol'd a new suit of the captain's clothes. And when he growed up big enough to fit 'em, he gaily dressed hisself and went up and paced the quarter-deck in deep thought. He had not forgot how the captain onc't had lashed him to the jib-

boom-poop and whipped him. That stung his proud spirit even then; and so the first thing he done was to slip up behind the cruel officer and push him overboard. Then the ship was his fer better er fer worse. And so he took command, and hung high upon the beetling mast the pirut flag. Then he took the bible his old mother give him, and tied a darnic round it and sunk it in the sand with a mocking laugh. Then it was that he was ready fer the pirut's wild seafaring life. He worked the business fer all they was in it fer many years, but was run in at last. And, standing on the gallus-tree, he sung a song which was all wrote off by hisself. And then they knocked the trap on him. And thus the brave man died and never made a kick. In life he was always careful with his means, and saved up vast welth, which he dug holes and buried, and died with the secret locked in his bosom to this day.

ON HACKMENS

Hackmens has the softest thing in the bizness. They hain't got nothing to do but look hump-shouldered and chaw tobacker and wait. Hackmens all look like detectives, and keeps still, and never even spits when you walk past 'em. And they're allus cold. A hackman that stands high in the p'fession can wear a' overcoat in dog-days and then look chilly and like his folks was all dead but the old man, and he wuz a drunkard. Ef a hackman would only be a blind fiddler he'd take in more

money than a fair-ground. Hackmens never gives nothin' away. You can trust a hackman when you can't trust your own mother. Some people thinks when they hire a hack to take 'em some place that the hackman has got some grudge ag'in' 'em—but he hain't—he's allus that way. He loves you but he knows his place, and smothers his real feelings. In life's giddy scenes hackmens all wears a mask; but down deep in their heart you can bet they are yourn till deth. Some hackmens look like they was stuck up, but they ain't—it's only 'cause they got on so much clothes. Onc't a hackman wuz stabbed by a friend of his in the same bizness, and when the doctors was seein' how bad he wuz karved up, they found he had on five shurts. They said that wuz all that saved his life. They said ef he'd only had on four shurts, he'd 'a' been a ded man. And the hackman hisse'f, when he got well, used to brag it wuz the closest call he ever had, and laid for the other hackman, and hit him with a car couplin' and killed him, and come mighty nigh goin' to the penitenchary fer it. Influenshal friends wuz all that saved him that time. No five shurts would 'a' done it. The mayor said that when he let him off, and brought down the house, and made hisse'f a strong man fer another term. Some mayors is purty slick, but a humble hackman may sometimes turn out to be jist as smooth. The only thing why a hackman don't show up no better is 'cause he loses so much sleep. That's why he allus looks like he had the headache, and didn't care if he did. Onc't a hackman wuz

waitin' in front of a hotel one morning and wuz sort o' dozin' like, and fell off his seat. And they run and picked him up, and he wuz unconshus, and they worked with him till 'way long in the afternoon 'fore they found out he wuz just asleep; and he cussed fearful cause they waked him up, and wondered why people couldn't never tend to their own bizness like he did.

ON DUDES

Everybody is allus a-givin' it to Dudes. Newspapers makes fun of 'em, and artists makes pictures of 'em; and the only ones in the wide world that's stuck on Dudes is me and the Dudes theirse'f, and we love and cherish 'em with all a parent's fond regards. And nobody knows much about Dudes neither, 'cause they hain't been broke out long enough yet to tell jist what the disease is. Some say it's softinning of the brains, and others claim it can't be that, on the groun's thay hain't got material for the softinning to work on, &c., &c., till even "Sientests is puzzled," as the good book says. And if I wuz a-going to say what ails Dudes I'd have to give it up, er pernounce it a' aggervated case of Tyfoid blues, which is my 'onnest convictions. That's what makes me kind o' stand in with 'em—same as if they wuz the under-dog. I am willing to aknolege that Dudes has their weakness, but so has ever'thing. Even Oscar Wild, if put to the test;—and I allus feel sorry for George Washington 'cause he died 'fore he got to see Oscar Wild. And then

another reason why you oughten't to jump on to Dudes is, they don't know what's the matter with 'em any more than us folks in whom they come in daily contack. Dudes all walks and looks in the face like they wuz on their way to fill an engagement with a revolvin' lady wax-figger in some milliner-winder, and had fergot the number of her place of bizness. Some folks is mean enough to bitterly a'sert that Dudes is strained in their manner and fools from choice; but they ain't. It's a gift—Dudes is Geenuses—that's what Dudes is!

ON RED HAIR

Onc't a pore boy wuz red-hedded, and got mad at the other boys when they'd throw it up to him. And when they'd laugh at his red hed, and ast him fer a light, er wuzn't he afeard he'd singe his cap, and orto' wear a tin hat; er pertend to warm their hands by him,—w'y, sometimes the red-hedded boy'd git purty hot indeed, and once he told another boy that wuz a-bafflin' him about his red hair that if he wuz him he'd git a fine comb and go to canvassin' his own hed, and then he'd be liabul to sceer up a more livelier subjeck to talk about than red hair. And then the other boy says, "You're a liar" and that got the red-hedded boy into more trouble; for the old man whipped him shameful' fer breakin' up soil with the other boy. And this here red-hedded boy had freckles, too. And warts. And nobody ortn't to 'a' jumpt on to him fer that. Ef anybody

was a red-hedded boy they'd have also warts and freckles—and jist red hair's bad enough. Onc't another boy told him ef he wuz him he bet he could make a big day look sick some night. And when the red-hedded boy says "How?" w'y, the other boy he says "Easy enough. I'd jist march around bare-hedded in the torch-light p'cession."—"Yes, you would," says the red-hedded boy, and pasted him one with a shinny club, and got dispelled from school 'cause he wuz so high-tempered and impulsive. Ef I wuz the red-hedded boy I'd be a pirut; but he always said he was going to be a baker.

THE CROSS-EYED GIRL

"You don't want to never tamper with a cross-eyed girl," said Mr. Judkins, "and I'll tell you why: They've naturally got a better focus on things than a man would ever guess—studyin' their eyes, you understand. A man may think he's a-foolin' a cross-eyed girl simply because she's apparently got her eyes tangled on other topics as he's a-talkin' to her, but at the same time that girl may be a-lookin' down the windin' stairway of the cellar of his soul with one eye, and a-winkin' in a whisper to her own soul with the other, and her unconscious victim just a-takin' it for granted that nothin' is the matter with the girl, only just cross-eyes! You see I've studied 'em," continued Judkins, "and I'm on to one fact dead sure—and that is, their natures is as deceivin' as their eyes is! Knowed one once't that had her eyes mixed up thataway—sensitive

little thing she was, and always referrin' to her 'misfortune,' as she called it, and eternally threatenin' to have some surgeon straighten 'em out like other folks'—and, sir, that girl so worked on my feelin's, and took such underholts on my sympathies that, blame me, before I knowed it I confessed to her that if it hadn't a been for her defective eyes (I made it 'defective') I never would have thought of lovin' her, and, furthermore if ever she did have 'em changed back normal, don't you understand, she might consider our engagement at an end—I did, honest. And that girl was so absolute cross-eyed it warped her ears, and she used to amuse herself by watchin' 'em curl up as I'd be a-talkin' to her, and that maddened me, 'cause I'm naturally of a jealous disposition, you know, and so, at last, I just casually hinted that if she was really a-goin' to get them eyes carpentered up, why she'd better get at it, and that ended it.

And then the blame' girl turned right around and married a fellow that had a better pair of eyes than mine this minute! Then I struck another cross-eyed girl—not really a legitimate case, 'cause, in reality, she only had one off eye—the right eye, if I don't disremember—the other one was as square as a gage. And that girl was, if any difference, a more confusin' case than the other, and besides all that, she had some money in her own right, and wan't a-throwin' off no big discount on one game eye. But I finally got her interested, and I reckon something serious might 'a' come of it—but, you see, her father was

dead and her stepmother sort o' shut down on my comin' to the house; besides that, she had three grown uncles, and you know how uncles is. I didn't want to marry no family, of course, and so I slid out of the scheme, and tackled a poor girl that clerked in a post-office. Her eyes was bad! I never did get the hang of them eyes of hern. She had purty hair, and a complexion, I used to tell her, which outrivaled the rose. But them eyes, you know! I didn't really appreciate how bad they was crossed, at first. You see, it took time. Got her to give me her picture, and I used to cipher on that, but finally worked her off on a young friend of mine who wanted to marry intellect—give her a good send-off to him—and she was smart—only them eyes, you know! Why, that girl could read a postal card, both sides at once, and smile at a personal friend through the office window at the same time!"

HOMESICKNESS

There was a more than ordinary earnestness in the tone of Mr. Judkins as he said: "Referrin' to this thing of bein' homesick, I want to say right here that of all diseases, afflictions er complaints, this thing of bein' homesick takes the cookies! A man may think when he's got a' aggrivated case of janders, er white-swellin', say, er bone-erysipelas, that he's to be looked up to as bein' purty well fixed in this vale of trouble and unrest, but I want to tell you, when I want my sorrow blood-raw, don't you understand, you may give me homesickness—

straight goods, you know—and I'll get more clean, legitimate agony out of that than you can out of either of the other attractions—yes, er even if you'd ring in the full combination on me! You see, there's no way of treatin' homesickness only one—and that is to get back home—but as that's a remedy you can't get at no drug store, at so much per box—and if you could, for instance, and only had enough ready money anyhow to cover half the cost of a full box—and nothin' but a full box ever reached the case—why, it follers that your condition still remains critical. And homesickness don't show no favors. It's just as liable to strike you as me. High er low, er rich er poor, all comes under her jurishdiction, and whenever she once reaches fer a citizen, you can just bet she gits there Eli, ever' time!

"She don't confine herself to youth, nor make no specialty of little children either, but she stalks abroad like a census-taker, and is as conscientious. She visits the city girl clean up to Maxinkuckee, and makes her wonder how things really is back home without her. And then she haunts her dreams, and wakes her up at all hours of the night, and sings old songs over for her, and talks to her in low thrillin' tones of a young man whose salary ain't near big enough fer two; and then she leaves her photograph with her and comes away, and makes it lively for the boys on the train, the conductor, the brakeman and the engineer. She even nests out the travelin' man, and yanks him out of his reclinin' chair, and walks him up and down the car, and runs

him clean out of cigars and fine-cut, and smiles to hear him swear. Then she gets off at little country stations and touches up the night operator, who grumbles at his boy companion, and wishes to dernation 'six' was in, so's he could 'pound his ear.'

"And I'll never forget," continued Mr. Judkins, "the last case of homesickness I had, and the cure I took for it. 'Tain't been more'n a week ago neither. You see my old home is a'most too many laps from this base to make it very often, and in consequence I hadn't been there for five years and better, till this last trip, when I just succumbed to the pressure, and th'owed up my hands and went. Seemed like I'd 'a' died if I hadn't. And it was glorious to rack around the old town again—things lookin' just the same, mighty nigh it, as they was when I was a boy, don't you know. Run acrost an old schoolmate, too, and took supper at his happy little home, and then we got us a good nickel cigar, and walked and walked, and talked and talked! Tuck me all around, you understand, in the meller twilight—till, the first thing you know, there stood the old schoolhouse where me and him first learnt to chew tobacco, and all that! Well, sir! you hain't got no idea of the feelin's that was mine! Why, I felt like I could th'ow my arms around the dear old buildin' and squeeze it till the cupolo would just pop out of the top of the roof like the core out of a bile! And I think if there ever was a' epoch in my life when I could 'a' tackled poetry without no compunctions, as the feller says, why, then was the time—shore!"